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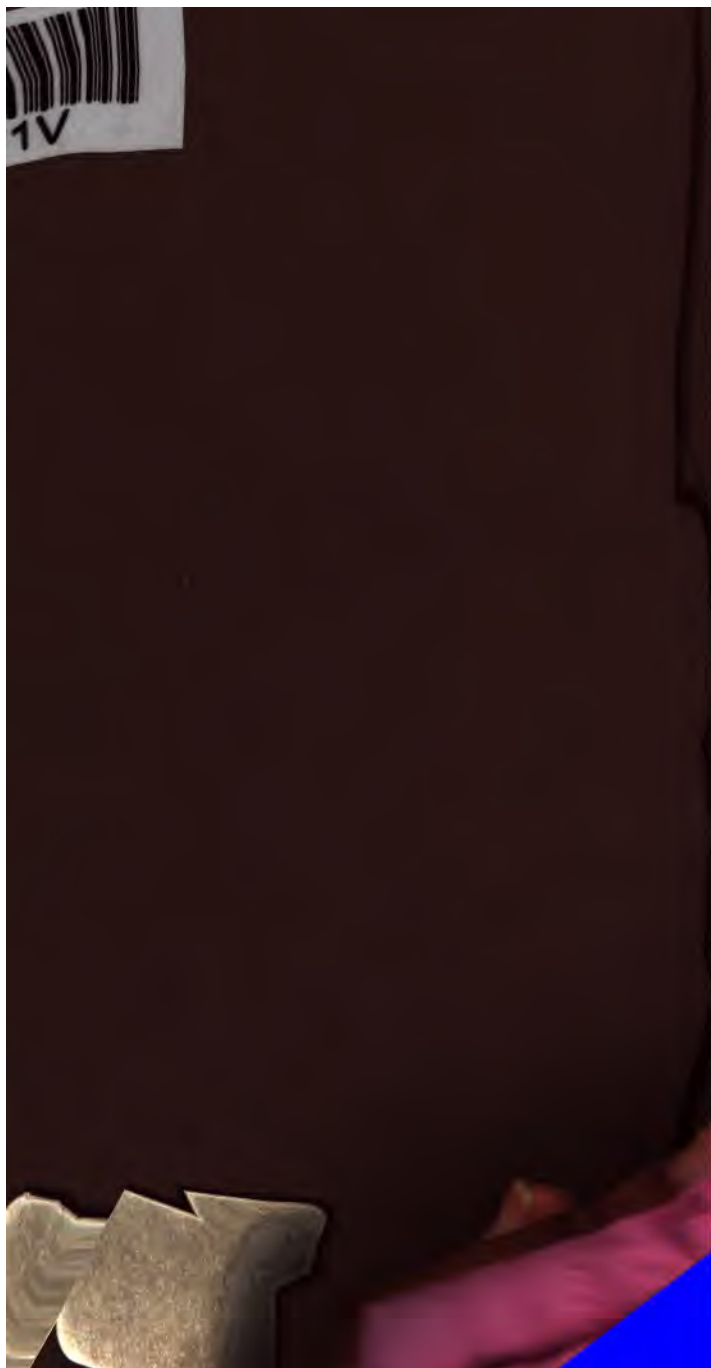
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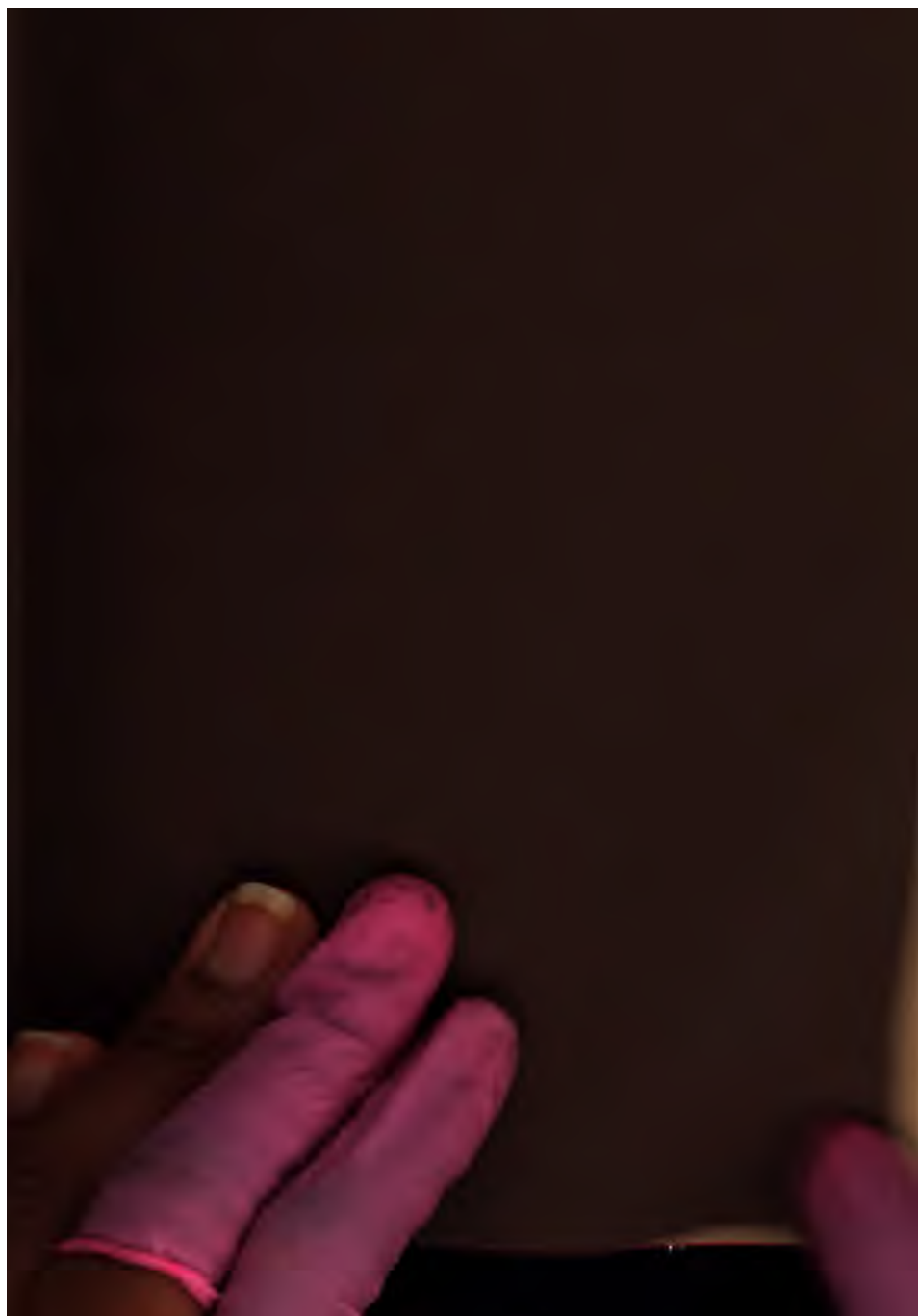
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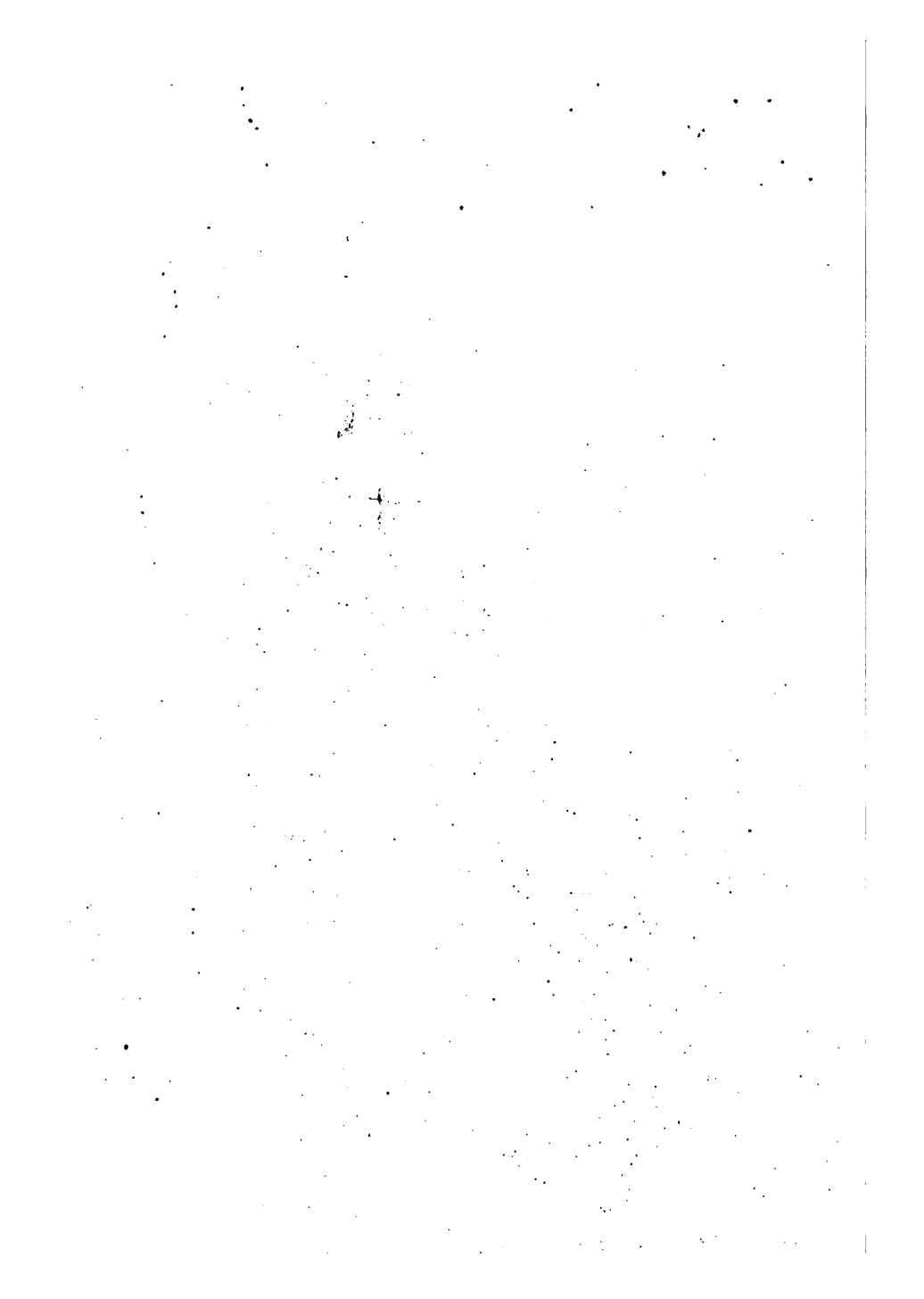
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London :

HODDER & STOUGHTON,

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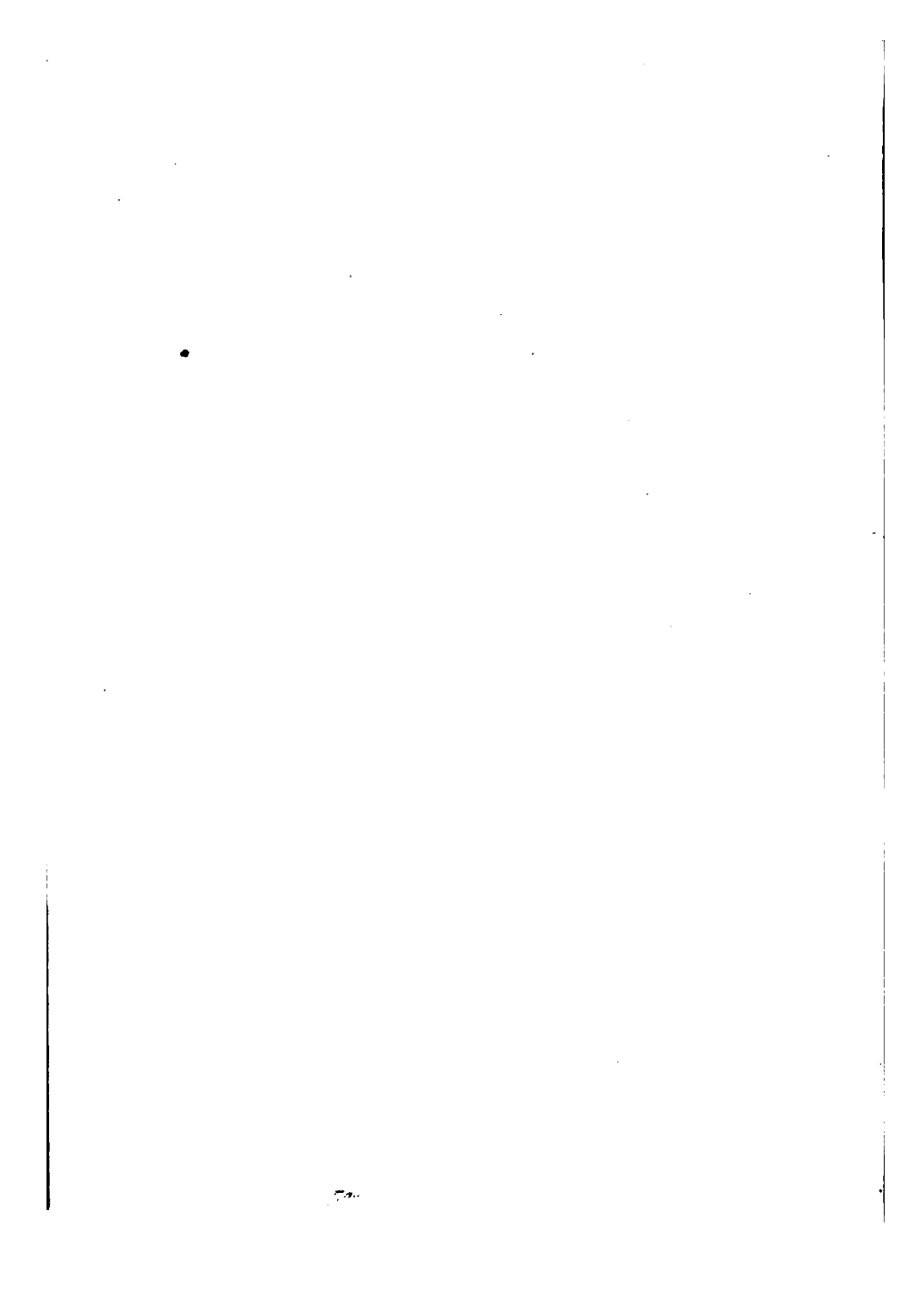
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THE DIVINE MYSTERIES.



THE
DIVINE TREATMENT OF SIN.

I.

The Fall Considered as a Development.



"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil."—GENESIS III. 22.

THE Scripture touches but lightly man's life in Eden; for, the text tells us, it was only through the Fall, and the experience which has sprung from it, that man has grown to the full form of man. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."* *"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."* The image was there, perfect in Eden. But it needed yet some touch of the living fire. Man, by one dread act, brought himself into a new and awful relation with the devil on the one

hand; on the other, with God. Till then, Eden had filled his calm horizon. By that act of freedom he widened its circuit; Heaven and hell then passed within his sphere. "*God made man in His own image.*" But the deepest power, the free power, was yet latent. By a dark act of rebellion he developed it; and the Lord God testifies that he had thereby become something which the words "as one of us" alone describe. And yet that act was deadly. Man, aiming at the height of God, fell perilously on the very edge of the abyss. No more awful condition of life, in point of grandeur and power, can be conceived, than the words "become as one of us" set forth; and yet the penalty of aiming at it was death. It was a step out, a step on for man in the unfolding of the latent powers and possibilities of his being as an embodied spirit; but it brought him within peril and under the hand of woes and evils, which have made his history one long wail, and his life one long night. There had been no pause in that wail, no break in that night, but that God met the first transgression with a sentence the heart of which was a promise. Its growing fulfilment has been the thread of light twined in the woof of earth's sad history.

God fixed that beam of heavenly light among the threads, when the loom was first set moving by that dread act wherein man asserted a power of will independent of God. That Divine promise, and not the self-directed exercise of freedom, has made man's life, with all its sins and sorrows, the royal fabric of the King of kings.

Adam, the child of Eden, made in God's image, could find the completeness of his life in Eden. The mould of his being was perfect, as an image; the compass of his powers presented him as the likeness of God in this material world. Adam, the child of the wilderness, having become by the act of freedom that which our text describes—having by the actual experiment of what power might be in him, by the actual unfolding of a life whose character and ends were expressly self-determined, grown into something which, if grander on the one hand than the estate in which he was created in the garden, was most terrible and sorrowful on the other—could find the completeness of his life alone in Christ and Heaven. The sinless child could pass his peaceful life in the safe nest and quiet range of an earthly Paradise. To hear the voice of the Lord God among the trees

of the garden, and to see His smile playing like the sunlight over his gentle toils, was his supreme satisfaction. For Adam, the exile of Eden, the man who had ventured into the untried world of rebellion against the benign law of the Heavenly King, and had begun to taste the fruits of that rebellion in the bitterness of his soul, a higher destiny was open through grace. Cut off from God, there was but one possible end to his rebellion. He must lie crushed at last under the weight of the system whose order he had violated, the Hand whose power he had defied. But if God should pitifully look upon His prodigal, and follow him into the wilderness with forgiving thoughts and the touch of a restoring hand, Adam had become that which was capable, not of presenting the Divine image only, but of partaking the Divine nature, and of entering, as the first Adam never could have entered, into all the high employments and holiest fellowships of Heaven.

I must beg you very earnestly to bear in mind that the sentence of our text, pronounced after the transgression, explicitly declares that man had become something different in relation to God, something higher in development if more alien in spirit, than

was expressed in the original constitution of the head of our race.

“*God made man in His own image,*” is the original description of the constitution of man. Then follows the dread history which the third chapter of the book of Genesis records; and then it is stated, “*Man is as one of us, knowing good and evil.*” The words imply, though they do not express, a growth. Our translators have rightly given the English equivalent to the Hebrew idiom in the word “become.” And the words “as one of us,” unquestionably imply a higher condition in point of development, than is expressed in the simple image-bearing which the first chapter of Genesis unfolds. I am well aware that some among the ablest commentators hold that there is keen irony here, the irony of God! Calvin develops the idea with his usual clearness and force. To me, it seems blankly incredible. Herder, too, looking at these solemn old records with the æsthetic eye, has some fine remarks on the irony of some of the most venerable passages of our primeval history. But one can hardly help feeling, in reading his exquisite and finished criticism on the early Hebrew poetry, that another eye, an eye having

discernment of deeper things than poetic beauty, is needed here. If this be irony, then we can believe that all life is irony, that all its sorrowful aspirations, hopes, and struggles, are the irony of heaven; and it is but a step further to the conclusion of a powerful and ancient school of Hindu philosophy, that creation—all that seems—is but the sick dream of the Supreme. No! These old words, whatever they may be, are honest; God does not begin in irony that progress which is to lead through Gethsemane and Calvary to Heaven.

Man, then, is said to have grown to something which is in one sense nearer to God, nearer to the Divine level—and the last clauses of the verse seem to imply that he was within reach of that which would bring him still nearer to the level;—but, on the other hand, there was a new spot of weakness, where he had become vulnerable to foes, whom, in his innocence, he might safely have despised; there was a new element of disorder, which would bring discord and dire confusion into the harmonious sphere of his powers; there was a new taint of decay and death, which, grand as he might seem to have grown by his experiment of freedom, would eat like

a canker into his godlike constitution, and unless some renewing, restoring influence should descend from Him who made him at the first, must lay its proud structure in ruins in the dust.

It is from the first the history of the Prodigal. The youngest born, the darling of the father's heart, the joy of his home, choosing to seek the ends of his being away from that home, and in defiance of the father's will; wandering forth into the wilderness, falling inevitably into poverty and straits, level with the beasts, and in peril of a shameful and miserable death. But he is acquiring there, brooding over his experiment of free will, and tracing out the paths of freedom to their issues, a breadth of knowledge, insight, and conviction, which, should the father in pity receive him to the home again, will make their fellowship richer in interest, joy, and hope than had been possible under other conditions, and will fill the home with songs more joyous, more triumphant than had ever been heard in Eden. *"It is meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy son was dead, but he is alive again; he was lost, but he is found."*

"Ye shall be as gods," was the devil's promise,

"knowing good and evil." The text affirms that there was a truth in it. *"Behold, the man is become as one of us."* And yet it was a lie to the heart's core. None but God could stand on that Divine level. Man should stand there one day, partaker of the Divine nature. But for the man who in native, naked, human strength should stand there, there could be no issue but death. The devil was right as to the development. Man brought himself into the sphere of higher and more Divine experiences than his life in Paradise could have afforded to him. But the devil said nothing about the death. *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,"* was the disenchantment, which, when Eve clung to the cold lips of Abel, and madly strove to rekindle there the glow of life, became complete. *"Ye shall be as gods!"* That rotting corpse of the beautiful shepherd, the darling of the first human home, was the comment on the devil's promise. And yet Abel has known something now, of which there was not even a dream in Paradise; and Adam, even through his bitter anguish, rose to a godlike experience; he was able

then to comprehend the sorrow with which the heart of the great Father had been filled by His child. The devil said to the prodigal, "Wander freely, spend, enjoy; that is life." The prodigal found it, as every sinner finds it, to be death. What life has come out of it has been born, not of it, but of the strength, the tenderness, the quickening power of the Father's redeeming love.

The life in Eden, as I have said, is touched lightly in the Scripture:—"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field: but for Adam there was not found

an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed." Milton paints out the picture. His conception of the Paradise life is the expansion of the suggestion that man was placed in the garden to dress it and to keep it. The hues with which he paints this beautiful and happy life in Eden have tinged all our notions. It is Milton, who has made the Paradise of our modern English world:—

“So pray’d they innocent, and to their thoughts
Firm peace recover’d soon, and wonted calm.
On to their morning’s rural work they haste,
Among sweet dew and flowers: where any row
Of fruit-trees over-woody reach’d too far
Their pamper’d boughs, and needed hands to check
Fruitless embraces: or they led the vine

To wed her elm ; she, spoused, about him twines
Her marriageable arms, and with her brings
Her dower, the adopted clusters, to adorn
His barren leaves."—*Paradise Lost, Book V.*

“ Adam, well may we labour still to dress
This garden, still to tend plant, herb, and flower,
Our pleasant task enjoined ; but till more hands
Aid us, the work under our labour grows
Luxurious by restraint ; what we by day,
Lop overgrown, or prune, or prop, or bind,
One night or two with wanton growth derides
Tending to wild. Thou therefore now advise,
Or hear what to my mind first thoughts present :
Let us divide our labours ; thou, where choice
Leads thee, or where most needs, whether to wind
The woodbine round this arbour, or direct
The clasping ivy where to climb ; while I,
In yonder spring of roses intermix'd
With myrtle, find what to redress till noon ;
For, while so near each other thus all day
Our task we choose, what wonder if so near,
Looks intervene and smiles, or object new,
Casual discourse draw on ; which intermits
Our day's work, brought to little, though begun
Early, and the hour of supper comes unearned ?”—*Book IX.*

Looking the subject calmly in the face do you feel satisfied that this was the life which was meant for man ? Exquisitely beautiful, lovely as a dream, as our memory of childhood's gladdest, sunniest hours, is this vision of Paradise. But still the question

presses sternly, as manhood presses on childhood, was it for this that man was made on such a scale of godlike proportion, and endowed with the most awful gift with which God even can endow a son? To wander pleasantly along the soft glades of a luxuriant garden, to bask on the grassy slopes in the noontide glow, lulled by the hum of joyous life that floats on the summer air, plucking at will the fruits that hang ripe in downy clusters within easy reach of his hand, and exercised by such gentle toils as might prune and chasten the too luxuriant beauty of his bower; lit by the rosy flush of dawn to his daily enjoyments, and by the moon's white cresset to his nightly repose; king in a world in which there could be no collision; inanimate nature soft and submissive as a bride adorned for her husband, animate nature an obedient subject at his feet. It is a fair vision; but it is a vision of childhood—man's childhood, and the world's. Thus it was with them, the Scripture says, in their infant days. But man was made for a strain such as no life in a Paradise could put on him. There are in him powers of endurance, of courage, of hope, and of faith, such as no dressing and keeping an Eden could bring into play. Man seems to be so organized

inwardly that his purest joys spring out of his sorrows, his riches grow by his losses, his fullest development is the fruit of his hardest toils, his noblest becomings of his most utter sacrifices—while God completes the cycle, and ordains that his immortal life shall spring out of his death. Thus man is organized. The question then arises, is this condition of things the accident of sin? Is this the full account of it—that man being in a sinful state, God has thus adapted his mental and moral organization, as the best expedient which the case allows, with a view to his restoration? Or was this contemplated in his first constitution and endowment? Was man made, were all his powers ordained, with a view to this life of toil, struggle, suffering, sacrifice, and Divine experience? Was man made for it? Was the world made for it? Was Heaven made for it? Is this the one way through which we are bound to believe that the highest end of God in the constitution of man and of all things is to be gained? And the answer must be, Yes. Man was made for it. Had he remained in Eden, the highest interest of heaven in man's career would have been lost; and more would have been lost, the highest, fullest, most absolute manifestation

of God. Him, redemption alone could fully declare. If man comes forth into full manhood through that perverse exercise of his freedom, which leaves human nature suppliant for redemption under peril of imminent death, God, in redeeming man from the penalties and fruits of that perverseness, reveals Himself most fully as God.

The whole system of things around us seems to me to be constituted with a view to redemption—which comprehends the discipline and education of souls. The wilderness was there waiting, and all the physical order of the world. That was before man, and was made for man. And it is all set to the same key-note of struggle, toil, and suffering. There is not a bit of rock or a blade of grass, there has not been from the creation, which is not a mute memorial of struggle, wounds, and death. All things travail, not simply because man has sinned, but because the redemption of the sinner is the work for which “the all” has been prepared by the Lord. When the Lord looked on from the height of His eternal throne, “to the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men,” was it Eden which He looked on to with solemn joy, or

Calvary? Was it glad intercourse which He foresaw with the loyal and loving children of Paradise, or sad, costly, but fruitful communion with the struggling, suffering children of the wilderness? Was it Eden, or Ararat, Canaan, Egypt, Sinai, Jerusalem, Calvary, and Christendom, that His glance comprehended? Was it the fruit of Eden, or the fruit which His tears and blood would win from these, that He then set them before His sight? Man and all things were made in concert, to form part of the same great system, of which man was to be the head. And the whole system, the whole structure of man and of the world, is moulded to be the theatre of the redemption of the sinner. Not in Eden, but there on Calvary, and in Heaven, which is the child of Calvary, we see realized the whole idea of God.

Was man, then, made to sin, or so made that sin is guiltless? This is the great question which inevitably arises out of any honest treatment of the text.

Yes! is the answer of a great school of thinkers, who, in every age, have acted powerfully on the beliefs of mankind—the school which has sought

“by searching” to find out God and the mystery of His ways. For those who have not seen, or who refuse to see, the light which God sheds on the problem, the help to reason which springs from faith, it is hard to understand how any other answer is possible. Take purely intellectual definitions of God and of His relation to the universe, and there seems to be no room for freedom, and no reality in sin. If man sins, according to this school, it is because he must sin. It is the inevitable action of the mechanism of his nature, or as the budding when the sap stirs in the ducts of flowers. Evil and good, fair actions and base, are but the various tones of the many-voiced organ of his being, but one hand in the universe touches them, one breath flows through them all, the hand and breath of Him who worketh all and in all. We are told that we take too narrow ground in our judgments; that sins, even the actions which we most despise and loathe, will prove, if we give them time enough, like Jacob’s tricks, but virtues in the bud. All things, it is said, have somewhat of a bitter tincture in their young bloom or blood, and so, too, hath man. Follies, sins, and crimes, give them but time enough for the noontide

•

of experience to purge and ripen them, will fruit in virtues ; while each man's contribution, whatever it may be, is essential to the general life, movement, and progress of the world.

This is the argument which this philosophy urges ; these are the conclusions to which it tends, and in which it endeavours to find rest. You may call it Pantheistic, or what you will, but you do not thereby get rid of it. There it is still, a powerful form of human belief in all ages, and working its poison, more or less triumphantly, through all the leading philosophies of the world.

It is still the dim belief, in this nineteenth century of Christendom, of the vast majority of the human race. And it is not a thing to be puffed down. It is wonderful how many roads of thought, that look specious enough, lead on to it in the end. Nor can it be met by the popular theological notion, that man and the universe having been created on one scheme and with one object, which the accident of man's transgression completely frustrated, all things had to be adapted to a new condition, and to aim at a new and previously unanticipated result.

Redemption is no accident. The need of being a

Redeemer lies deep in the nature of God ; and not only was man's sin foreseen, but all things were ordered with a view to the great drama of Redemption, from before the foundation of the world.

But was sin pre-ordained ? The sun was ordained to shine, the moon to embosom and radiate his tempered beams. The flowers were ordained to bloom, the rain to fertilize, the lightning to scathe, the whirlwind to uproot and to destroy. Is it part of the Divine plan of creation, that as the sun shines and the rain descends, some men should blaspheme, and some rob, hate, and murder ? Are these dark shadows of life but the inevitable attendance of its virtues, brought out into sharper outline where the light is clearest—and their necessary foil ; or else the stages through which God leads the development of nascent virtues, purifying them in the crucible of each as they pass through ? To this question the answer of the Bible and of the Church is “ No ! a thousand times No ! ” God has set His witness against this in the picture of Eden and the history of the Fall, and to this witness the history of sin adds an emphatic Amen. Man has never been able, in the long run, to shake off the horror

which sin inspires, as his own hateful and accursed work. Responsibility, in the fullest sense which that word will bear, is the broadest, strongest, most insoluble fact in the spiritual history of our race.

"God made man upright, but he has sought out many inventions ;" and nothing can deliver man from the consciousness that the "*I*" which has sought them out represents something which, whatever it may be, distinctly is not God.

Behind all the solutions which Paganism offers of the mystery of life, there is the haunting consciousness that man's sinful personality is a self-determining power which, whatever it may be, whencesoever it may come, is not God, and is not necessarily the manifestation of God. I shall have more to say upon the point when I come to speak of the penitent's creed,—"*I have sinned ; I have perverted that which is right, and it profited me not,*"—for the present I simply say, that I believe the universal human experience upholds this creed as the absolute truth. Of course it is easy to make broad and bold assertions about universals. A man is prone to find in universal history the theory which he brings to it ; but nothing seems to me more

broadly marked on the Theism, and even on the Pantheism of Paganism, than the conviction, whether it be in full health or half-strangled, that by sin, man discovered in himself a self-determining power—a power capable of originating acts and states, in itself not Divine, which is able to set up in this universe something which is not of God, which is not according to the mind of God, and which, if He is to hold the rule, He must transmute or destroy. It is the deepest witness of consciousness, this “I” which is not God. It is in sin that this individuality, this lonely and responsible “I” starts forth with such dread distinctness. Man knows what the “I” means, and then only fully, when he sees that he has become the parent of that which is hateful to God, the genius of which he cannot charge on God, which exposes him righteously to the judgment of God, and which God lives to trouble and destroy.

This is the consciousness of sin in the human spirit; and this agonizing consciousness neither intellectual subtleties nor devilish falsehoods can charm out of the conscience of mankind. A man, a class, a race, may shake itself free from it for a time, but *man* never. “*Father, I have sinned,*” is the only

confession which reaches the depths of the human consciousness; and the Gospel which demands the confession, and begins its ministry by deepening the conviction of sin, alone seems to be able to undertake the cure. As matter of history it is palpably true, that the convincing of sin, the inspiring a horror of sin—a horror which took many grotesque and ghastly forms in the early Christian centuries—was the first work of that Gospel which was God's message to all mankind.

The history of conscience, then, I hold to be conclusive. There is a profound, universal, unalterable conviction of the moral consciousness in man, that his sin springs out of an "I" which is not God; that his sin is his own, his creature, for which he is as responsible as God is for the order of the world. "Conscience," I think I hear some Rationalist sneering, "Conscience, yes! its fright has been real enough, and sad enough, in all ages; but what is conscience but a puppet whose wires are pulled by the priest. If the priest would be quiet, conscience would soon be at rest." But the priest is the creature of the conscience, not the conscience of the priest. It is the dread reality behind, which endows

the priest with all his power ; his yoke had been cast off and ground to fragments long ago, for none has pressed so heavily, but for the great mystery of sin, with which he has the art to play. It is the awful sense of the burden which the sinner takes on himself by sin, of the taint which has infected the self with a poison which no force that he is master of will expel, which lends to the men who proffer their aid in man's dire extremity such tremendous influence, and lays the pagan world prostrate at their feet. No! the priest shall himself be summoned as witness, and his lips shall utter the chief testimony to the reality of the guilt of sin.

Sin then *is*, and is not God's creature. The being capable of sinning *is* God's creature. For making him capable of sinning God is responsible, and there His responsibility, as concerns man's transgression, ends. For making me as I am, capable of sin, for bringing me into a sinful world in a body of sinful flesh, God is responsible ; not for my sin, that grows up of myself in *me*. But for sending forth into such a world as this generation after generation of living beings born to sin and to suffer, God is responsible. It is idle to say, by way of solving the difficulty on

easy terms, that this is the work of Adam, not of God; that from him all our sin and suffering flow. From Adam indisputably. "*By one man's disobedience sin entered into the world, and death by sin.*" But who makes the law of the inheritance? The fatal relation with Adam is established by the hand and sustained by the will of God. It is within the power of His hand to make men in their birth pure and upright as He made Adam in Eden; but He has chosen that we shall be born the children of the sinful Adam, and shall taste the fruit of his disobedience from the first. He takes the responsibility—and we must look that fact fairly in the face—of sending us into a world in which, as our nature develops, and His law is revealed, the cry, "I am carnal, sold under sin," will inevitably fall from our lips. We are bound to believe that Adam in Eden, dressing and keeping the garden, would not have afforded room, in his nature, for the unfolding of the whole idea of God. The true Man is the second Man, the Lord from Heaven, and the Manhood which is transformed into His likeness; and that Divine figure of a man, the man of God's eternal kingdom, abides not in Eden, but beyond the wil-

derness life of transgression, and beyond the river of death. I say, that we are bound to believe this, for God could, at His will, have abolished the fallen Adam and his race, and produced new unfallen children in each successive age of the world. But He has chosen to prolong the race of sinners, because from the first the one great aim of His heart was redemption. To reign as King in a redeemed creation has been from the first His vision of Heaven.

And here, too, the vision of Redemption opens in its profound relation to the whole system of the universe, and the whole plan of God, in the creation, constitution, and government of the world. It is the godlike act of God. God without a race to redeem by sacrifice, and to rule redeemed, must have kept the glory of His Godhead veiled. Emmanuel, God with us, declares for the first time the glory of the Father; the express image of His substance was then, and then only, unveiled. God made man free, knowing that the unfolding of his freedom in such a body, in such a world, would lead him into dread experience of transgression; would lead him down to death, unless He interposed to

save. Accepting the responsibility of the existence of a world of sinners (and the Deluge could as easily have finished its work), He accepted at once the responsibilities of Redemption. At once He stooped to lift the burden which else had crushed His helpless child. At once He set to light the pathways of the wilderness, on the brow of the first sentence, a bright gem of hope. At once He placed the Manger, the Garden, the Cross, the Grave, fully before His sight. That was the share which He took at once of the great burden, the great sorrow, the great shame, with which sin had oppressed the world. That Divine share in the shame and sorrow makes man's history the supreme history of the universe. This is the thread which, entwined with the dark woof of the history of man's freedom, makes the fabric more costly, more precious, than any which is woven "in the roaring loom of time," more noble, more fruitful, more Divine.

The sinless Adam could rest in Paradise till the serpent stung him into transgression. For the sinful Adam, through God's abounding love and the riches of His grace, there is rest in Heaven, and in Heaven alone. No restoration of Eden could satisfy the con-

dition of the grand problem which the Fall has stated. There are but two solutions possible. Either man must lie where his sin has sunk him, or he must rise through Redemption to a higher, Diviner manhood, and eating of the tree of life in Christ, live before the face of God for ever. The first Adam is by grace abolished; the elder glory is done away by reason of the glory that excelleth. "*The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*" Not from Eden, but from the pathways of the weary wilderness, all sinful and stained with tears, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is taken to be arrayed in the pure white splendour of His righteousness; and blessed, blessed beyond Adam in Eden, blessed beyond angels in Heaven, are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

II.

The Burden of Existence.



"And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it : cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life ; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field ; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."—GENESIS III. 17—19.

THE main object of the first discourse was to develop the thought expressed in the words, "*Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.*" We may not shut our eyes to the fact that the fall is spoken of as a step in man's development, though, if it rests there, a fatal one. A step out into freedom, but a freedom which, unless some

higher power interfere, is simply a freedom to die. There is no escape from death for the freeman who has sought to realize his freedom in separating his mind and will from God. The complete freeman is the child of two—of free humanity and the Divine Spirit. If God fails him, freedom is death. In fact, it is but an illusory freedom that he wins. It is the passage into a fatal bondage. The freedom is but exercised in choosing his captivity. The desires of the flesh and of the mind become thenceforth his lords. From that moment, corrupting and destroying forces are at work upon the structure of his nature ; it is a spurious freedom which he has grasped at ; God only can make it real. "Carnal, sold under sin," must thenceforth be written of him, and unless some new order of things arise out of the will of a Superior Being who has power to make that will effective, his act of freedom is the beginning of death.

This must be clearly borne in mind ; the sentence, "*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,*" is absolutely and inevitably true. The devil uttered a half truth. Is it not characteristic of all his suggestions? He saw the development, but he did not see the death. But the development must

be as clearly borne in mind. Man, by that act, widened quite infinitely the range of his experience, he expanded the orbit of his being, Heaven and hell came equally within its sphere. A knowledge of the things of God, such as no being inexperienced in the mystery of freedom could attain to, was within his range of power on the one hand; an experience of evil, of woe and wretchedness, the mere dream of which could never have entered his quiet Paradise, was too dreadfully within his reach on the other. God recognizes the development: and God records the judgment—death.

So far, man by the Fall has taken a step out into a wider world, but the step is a deadly one. He has changed the quiet limits of his Eden for the free broad wilderness, but his one mission there is to find himself a grave. *“And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman He said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow*

and thy conception ; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children ; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it : cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life ; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee ; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field ; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground ; for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Is this to be the end of the experiment : the act of freedom, judgment, death ? It were a dark mystery were it left here. The creation of man, had this been the swift end of it, would have remained a stain on the wisdom and goodness of Him who is responsible for all that may come of creation, and at the door of whose government this abortion of freedom must have lain as a reproach for ever. We must look wider afield.

Man is manifestly made on a scale which no Paradise life can explain. Similarly, creation, through all its orders, is made on a scale which can only be

explained by man. In every order of the creation there is a propulsive movement to the next higher order, and rudiments of organization exist in each, to which higher organisms are the key. The key to the whole, as well as *of* the whole, is man. And man in Eden was on a scale which his history in the wilderness alone explains and justifies. There are in him godlike powers of endurance, sacrifice, and ministry—wherein man shows likest God—which a life of sorrow and struggle in the midst of a world which is struggling and sorrowing, alone could unfold. We are, in truth, justified in saying that Adam, in Eden, was spiritually but an embryo, and these sorrows and struggles are the pains of his travail, through which, by grace, he is born into his full manhood in Heaven. By *grace*, I say, but this is anticipating.

Looking at man then as he is, we may say that such a life as Paul lived was a higher, nobler, Diviner life than any which was within the sinless Adam's reach. Looking at the world, too, we see everywhere traces that it was made to be the theatre of such a sorrowful and struggling life as man's. It was made before man, and for man; and, whether Mr.

Darwin be right or wrong as to higher matters, "struggle for life" is its broad, grand characteristic. It sounds simple and calm enough in the sacred record. *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called He Seas: and God saw that it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb*

yielding seed, and the fruit yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth : and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind : and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day."

But lift the veil. Everywhere beneath is life unfolding, through struggle, suffering, and death. Every blade of grass, every lump of stone, has been fed by death, and feeds life, to die. This was all ordered before man, and for man, and was set from the first to the key-note of his life. And it all says plainly that the Fall was no accident which has deranged the orderly plan of creation, calling for some new device to repair the fracture and restore the waste ; but rather a step, the whole character and issues of which were contemplated from the beginning of creation, and which becomes the condition of the full unfolding of the nature of man and the glory of God.

Did God, then, make man to sin ? Is it all His work, the sin and the salvation ? No, we again repeat, a thousand times, no ! A sin that God made would be no sin. Connect it with God, and the

word is meaningless. A sin is the birth into the universe of something which is not after the will of God. Sin in man is the rising up within him of that which, be it what it may or whence it may, he knows is not God; for which he cannot make God responsible, and the burden of which—and here is the anguish and horror of it—he cannot shift off from himself. This horror and anguish are man's witnesses in all ages that sin is a stern reality which no philosophy can explain away. The priest does not make the burden, it is the burden which, among the ignorant and wretched, makes the priest. Sin *is*, and "*by one man sin entered into the world:*" it is not God's work. "*And sin reigneth unto death.*" Death is its inevitable consummation and doom.

Here, then, we have a being who has stepped out into a development which was forecast before his creation, who was made upon a scale which that development, with all its bitter fruits, alone explains, and who was placed in a world manifestly fitted to be the theatre of that development, and yet the liberty which he has won is simply the liberty to die. He has risen to a lofty height of capacity and experience; he has sunk to a fearful depth in actual condition

and possible destiny. What shall we say, then? Is it that God made a being whose first step—which, though God did not tell him to take it, nay, warned him against taking it, God knew that he would take—was his ruin; a race, a world, broken from their very birth? Or is it that the Fall, if viewed by itself, and apart from Redemption, would be an unmeaning, and incomprehensible abortion of a Divine idea; and that the God who made man, in the very act of making him, took upon Himself the burden and responsibility of a Redeemer—and thus made him, not that he might sin, but that sinning he might be saved.

Here the vision of Redemption opens. The first judgment on man was the first lifting of the curtain on the drama:—“*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*” Read at once, it was all contained in those primeval words, the Messianic chapter in Isaiah:—“*He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:*

yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment : and who shall declare His generation ? for He was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was He stricken."—(Isa. liii. 3—8.) These words were written in the Divine counsel before Adam was fashioned ; and when the Lord made such a race and such a world, and foresaw sin and all its fruits, this was the burden which He took upon His own heart.

For sin, then, the act of transgression, God is not to any extent, in any way responsible, save for the creation of a being who was capable of it. But when we pass on to consider the history of the race, a new and more difficult problem affronts us ; we

find the Creator assuming a new responsibility with regard to sin, the nature of which we must now explore.

Is each new birth of a living child into our world a new and independent experiment of freedom, under the same conditions as that of Adam, and happening invariably to issue in the same results? This Pelagian view is very widely entertained, especially by those who bear the reputation of advanced thinkers; but I confess that it appears to me to account very feebly for the moral phenomena of the world. The child of a vicious sire does not come into the world as Adam came forth from the hand of God. And the child of a long line of vicious sires? Is there a moral crippling, which has its visible analogue in the shaky scrofulous limbs which such an ancestry hands down? It is a deep, dark subject, but it is one which cannot always be put aside among the closeted skeletons of the Church. The infant of a thief's, drunkard's, or gambler's home finds anything but an Eden around him in his undeveloped days. Adam's sin has changed the conditions under which his children are born and grow. Human nature, whereof we all are partakers, has a

distinct unity of its own. When we speak of humanity, we do not describe simply an aggregation of isolated, independent individuals, who happen to repeat, each for himself, the same experiment, and to arrive at the same result. There is a certain tincture which runs through the whole of it, and Adam made that tincture what it is. "*By one man sin entered into the world,*" and "*by that one man's disobedience many were made sinners.*" God has so related us to Adam that our nature, wherein we were born, is what his sin has made it; and out of that nature, with the first dawnings of consciousness, transgressions come. This condition of human nature, out of which, as consciousness developes, transgressions grow, and which we owe to the sin of our head, theologians may call original sin. It is, in many respects, an unfortunate term; but we need some term to express the truth, that each man is not an independent and isolated Adam, but a child of the fallen Adam, inheriting something from Adam the sinner, which Adam in Paradise had never transmitted to his sons. But when theologians pass on to treat the term "original sin" as equivalent to "original guilt," as though with the nature guilt

had descended; when they maintain, as is maintained substantially in all confessions which follow the Augustinian view, that "therefore, in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation," they announce a dogma which in its naked simplicity is simply horrible; they confound all intelligent notions of what sin and guilt must mean in any but theological language; and they attribute to God, whose will it is that under this law of inheritance children should be born into this world, a malignant delight in punishment, which would, were it widely current, make belief impossible to all whose special theological culture had not specially qualified them to believe a lie.

And it is mere idleness, as we have seen, to attempt to evade the difficulty on the ground that the sin is Adam's work, and that God simply recognizes and deals with it as a fact, of which He is not the author, but of which He is bound to take account. The sin is Adam's work, but who established that headship, in virtue of which Adam's nature and the fruit of his transgression descends to his sons? The law of inheritance is God's work, not Adam's. A man is responsible for his own

transgressions, but what he shall transmit is beyond the sphere of his own volition. That goes according to laws in the establishment and maintenance of which he is utterly powerless, which have been enacted and are swayed by God. If each child born into our world brings into that world a nature which has become what it is by the sin of Adam, it is because God wills that under these conditions each human child shall be born and grow. Man is powerless here ; God is all-powerful to do according to His own will. The power which made Adam could make ten thousand Adams, and renew in each generation the first, the typical experiment of free-will. But God, the infinite in wisdom and in goodness, has chosen otherwise ; and He makes Himself responsible for the perpetuation of a sinful race in a suffering world. Paul's argument, in Romans v. 12—14, is decisive as to the relation existing by nature between the human members and Adam, the head. Death reigns over all ; the infant, the veteran, the Jew, the Christian, the Pagan, are alike and equally the subjects of his sway, for they alike partake of the nature which Adam corrupted by his transgression, and they partake of the fruit of the transgression, which

then attached itself to the race. But guilt is another matter ; that can attach to the individual alone, in the deliberate exercise of his developed will ; through a wilful choosing of the evil, when the good was plainly within his sight and choice. For what man is, as he comes into the world and grows to the full possession and exercise of his freedom, the Father of Spirits makes Himself responsible. It is not that God made a sinful nature, and ordained that man should inherit it ; but man having made a nature sinful, God ordains that it shall perpetuate itself after its likeness in each generation, and takes upon Himself the burden of this natural corruption and misery of the world.

And the burden must needs be a very awful burden ; a burden which must press heavily on the heart of God ; a burden which nothing but a great love and a great hope could bear. There was a moment when the pressure of the burden was overwhelming ; when what God saw on the earth was too terrible for Him to suffer it to endure :—“ *And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the*

Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. . . . The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. . . . In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights. . . . And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth, and every man: all in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died. And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man, and cattle, and the creeping

things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth: and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark."

—(Gen. vi. vii.)

This is a very terrible record; most terrible, if we try to imagine the cost of this patience, which at length was wearied, to the Being who had made Himself responsible for the possible existence of all this; not for its creation, but for its continued existence, with all the reproach which it seemed to cast on Heaven, and all the agony with which it tormented the world. The earth was corrupt and *full* of violence. The time had been when He had looked on all that He had made, and "behold it was very good;" and now it repented Him that He had made it. The agony of life had become too intolerable for Heaven to look upon, the desolation of earth too drear. This leads me to the main subject of this discourse—the burden of existence, under the conditions which, created by the sin of Adam, have been perpetuated by the will of God.

It was a simple matter, the creation of an Eden; a peaceful, joyous life smiled childlike in the face of Heaven, which dropped responsive benedictions.

Full of deep and solemn gladness, we can well believe, were those immortal spirits who watched the pathways of the young world, and wondered and gladdened at the beauty of the infant creation, with its ἀνήριθμον γέλασμα, and the glorious godlike form whose hand grasped its sceptre, and ruled all its myriad dependent orders as king. When this earth emerged, rosy as a bride, and all begemmed with splendours, out of the dark womb of chaos, well might the morning stars sing together, and all the sons of God shout aloud for joy.

Alas, that so fair and bright a promise should be blighted so soon! We read on but a few pages in the only record that remains to us of that primeval time, and the earth is "full of deceit and violence," of woe and wailing, of bitter misery and shameful wrong, and God repented Him of His work. Already it had cost too dear—the cost that Heaven chiefly recks of, the tears, and groans, and moans of men. It is a dread world for a loving and righteous God to create and sustain. We catch but a few faint notes of the great monotone of pain and despair, which goes up ever into the ear of Heaven from a world which God made to be so blest. Do you ever

set yourself fairly to realize what lies bare to the eye of Heaven in the daily life and travail of the world? We talk of houses with their fronts off, and what they would reveal to us. Think of the world with its veil off, and the burning eye upon it; all, of which you catch faint and passing glimpses and shudder, bare in its naked horror before the eye of God. Things noble, beautiful, and glorious, blessed be God, mingle with them, and catch and flash back like gems through the darkness the light which streams over it all from on high. But there was a time when the earth was *full* of deceit and violence, and when one man only found favour with the Lord. Picture it, when this was the testimony of the loving and hoping Being who made it all, and who made it to be blest. Picture it now: take a day's walk with a city missionary in any poor district of London, and survey, if you can without shuddering, the filth, the squalor, the famine, the nakedness, the sickness, the cursing, the blasphemy, the brutality, that abound. There are little helpless infants by myriads, shrieking in their bitter agony of pain or hunger, to be silenced by curses and blows awhile, till the screams

break out afresh. The tender mother's heart, on which the great Father cast the young nurslings—most helpless of all the infants of creation—as hard and cold as the bare stones on which they lie, moaning and sobbing into life. There are myriads of poor women, sick, weary, so full of pain and heart-ache, that a plunge into the midnight river would be a balmy rest, but for the little ones for whom the mother drags herself, with stern courage, which is always on the edge of breaking strain, through the daily sixteen hours of monotonous toil, for a wage which just keeps them in bread, but will not drive the wolfish look of famine out of their gaunt faces. It is a sight of agony to a mother's heart, the mute cry of famine in childish eyes; and what is it to the great Father who sent them hither, and keeps them here, and on whom the responsibility of suffering the existence of such misery wholly rests! I need not multiply specimens of the life of great cities in their Rookeries and Rag-fairs. Set before your mind's eye all that you have seen of sin, sickness, and misery; and multiply it by myriads, by millions. See every great city of the world full of this, or worse. For this is Christian England; God only

knows—men tremble to say what they have seen of the horrors of the life of the poor in the great cities of the East. Picture, too, the brutal degradation, the sullen misery of the great masses of the tillers of the ground through the whole empire of Paganism ; the tortures, physical and moral, of the millions of embruted slaves, who through the world are held to toil by the whips of their hardly less brutal lords. The myriads of living men—each of them bound as tenderly as you are to a circle which holds them dear, and which will be filled with anguish by their loss—whom emperors, kings, and presidents can, by touching a bell or signing a name, hurl against each other in furious shock ; leaving them inevitably dashed to fragments, strewn, like the dead leaves of autumn, on the bloody ground, while wide neighbourhoods of men wail, as once Rachel wailed for her children, and refuse to be comforted because they are not. Measure it all, as far as your little line will reach—the sins of power, the woes of its victims,

“The oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law’s delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes”—

and remember that all which you can imagine of human misery and wrong, is but as a pool on the sea-shore to the great ocean; that that great ocean is bare to the eye of God, and that ever the question is before Him—Shall I bear it yet, or destroy? Measure this, and you will understand something of the burden of existence, as it is felt by Him who knows all that flows out of existence, who sees all the raging madness, and hears all the moaning misery of the world. And He endures it; He endures it even with the memory of Eden, for the sake of the great hope which He cherishes of the glory which grace may bring out of it in His eternal Heaven. He spake not of things which He but looked down upon from the supreme height of His serene blessedness when He said, “Behold, we count them happy which endure.” Measuring the burden of existence under the conditions which sin has developed, we see that the supreme endurance in the universe is the endurance of God!

A very terrible endowment, too, is life for man. To those who are content to dart about in the shallows, gay in the sunlight, and catch the flies which the stream bears down, life may be merry

enough ; and they will turn a very impatient ear to those who speak of it as an awful endowment, and who realize that the pressure of its burden may be greater than a man can bear ; but the gay theory finds but little support from Scripture, and as little from the history of mankind. The first human home may perhaps be taken as striking the key-note of history. And what is the picture which it presents to us ? Beauty, innocence, gentleness, faith, dead on the cold ground, blood-flecked and ghastly ; while power, manly vigour, imperious will, stagger forth from the childless home in a horror of remorse and misery, moaning already in the ear of outraged Heaven, " My punishment is greater than I can bear." To men who live, who are not content simply to play at living, there are moments when life appears not only a wonderful, but a terrible thing, a gift too awful to be forced on any man without the consent of his free will. But He who gives it asks no consent of us, and leaves no choice. He calls us forth into life under conditions which sin and death have made for us, and which He elects to perpetuate, and He compels us to live on and to bear the burden, till death, through death, and to

eternity. The burden, be it light or heavy ; and how much of the weight depends on temperament and early nurture, with which our will has absolutely nothing to do ! There is a child of sickly or vicious parents, born with a rotten constitution, which will make life one long, weary strain, and nursed to a temper which will break out through life in a ceaseless battle against society. Perhaps trained to be a thief, taught to hate, as a child, the laws and the order which are the securities of freedom to the virtuous and genial, but which become iron prison-bars to the young outlaw, which will eventually cage him, nay, crush him at last ! And that man must bear his burden as surely as the most light-hearted of us ; he may have God's help to bear it, but he shall not lay it down. Misery drives myriads of the weary and heavy-laden to take arms against this sea of troubles, and, by one daring effort break from them into the quiet sleep of death, in its quiet home—the grave ! Yes—

“ But in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil ! ”

The vision of the betrayed and murdered Saviour so haunted the brain of the betrayer, that it drove

him to madness. "*Judas went and hanged himself.*" The victim of the cross was the last image which faded from before his starting eyeball, as it glared in its last agony here. "The Lamb as it had been slain," was the first form that affronted him, as his eye opened there on the visions of eternity. "*It had been better for that man that he had never been born.*"

But it is not from the world's chief criminals or traitors that we draw our illustrations of the burden of existence. There are true and faithful men and women by myriads, who have felt the heart ache so keenly, as those dearer than their own being have passed through the veil and vanished from their touch and sight, that every dear bond has become a pain because of its inevitable rupture ; they have to school themselves to accept thankfully the dearest gifts of Heaven, because of the sorrow which they will bring with the joy to overstrained and lacerated hearts. And, sounding the deeper mysteries of existence, he was one of the world's best and greatest, who once cried in intolerable anguish, "*O miserable man than I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?*" There was once, too, a grand old

Eastern patriarch and father of his tribe, who could paint this picture of his life :—" *When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out.*" (Job xxix. 11—16.) That man, by no sin of his own, came to utter the most awful anathema on his own existence, which survives in any literature. " *And Job spake, and said, Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived. Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it. Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it. As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months. Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein.*

*Why died I not from the womb? Why did I not give
give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? Why
did the knees prevent me, or why the breasts that I
should suck? For now should I have lain still and
been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest."*

(Job iii. 2—7; 11—13.) The noblest men, aiming at their noblest, are perhaps most conscious of the pressure. The confessions of David, of St. Augustine, of Alfred the Great, are full of a cry which not seldom deepened into a moan, "The burden is greater than I can bear." These are the men who mourn most bitterly over the sin which taints the holiest purpose, the infirmity which cripples the manliest effort, the weariness which palsies the combatant even when battling for the noblest prize. They see the shadow of self haunting even the most sublime self-sacrifice; doubts of the reality of things unseen sickly o'er the most heroic faith. Passion, self-will, ambition, worldliness, and lust, are still insurgent, and against them they have to stand ever full armed on guard. Life is to the noblest a ceaseless, weary war against self, a self from which they never can, in their own strength, get free. The noblest, too, are the loneliest here.

The world ill fits them, and they ill fit the world. Life becomes a great longing; and if the future but prolongs the present, if they can but see before them an eternity under the same conditions, the burden does become greater than they can bear. Paganism adds its witness. Not its worst children, but its best and wisest, are pressed most hardly by the burden of life. I quote two passages which appear to me to utter with singular simplicity and intensity the cry of the Pagan heart under the pressure. The one is from the hot East, the other from the cold, hardy North. The atmosphere of homely but bleak Northumbria breathes in the one, the glow of tropical India in the other.

“Led by illusion on a difficult road, the caravan of souls wanders in the forest of existence, thirsting for happiness, but unable to find it. Five brigands (the senses) pillage it. Assailed in a forest, entangled with bind-weed, grass, and bushes, the traveller flies, carried on by his desires; tormented by the cries of innumerable crickets, which torture his ears, and the voice of the screech-owl that agitates his heart, he stops exhausted by hunger near poisonous trees, or rushes toward water which proves a mirage. Now wishing to ascend a mountain, he slips through thorns and stones, and stops at last worn out. Here he is seized by reptiles. Now seeking honey, is stung by bees that produce it. Disputing with his companions, losing the goods they take from him, he falls down on the road overwhelmed with grief. Leaving behind those who fall, the caravan marches

on, dragging in its course all those who are born. Not one ever goes back on his steps. Now the traveller clings to the branches of the bind-weed, attracted by the songs of the birds hidden within. He carries his chain without hope of breaking it. No one knows the term of his voyage."—*Bhagavata Purana*, translated by Bournouf, quoted by E. de Pressensé.

Another of the king's (Edwin of Northumbria, A.D. 627) chief men, approving of the words and exhortation of Paulinus (the Christian missionary), said,—“The present life of man, O king, seems to me, in comparison of that time which is unknown to us, like to the swift flight of a sparrow through the room wherein you sit at supper, in winter, with your commanders and ministers, and a good fire in the midst, whilst the storms of hail and snow prevail abroad ; the sparrow, I say, flying in at one door, and immediately out at another, whilst he is within, is safe from the wintry storm ; but after a short space of fair weather, he immediately vanishes out of your sight into the dark winter from which he had emerged. So this life of man appears for a short space, but of what went before, or what is to follow, we are utterly ignorant. If therefore, this new doctrine contains something more certain, it seems justly to deserve to be followed.”—*Bede, Hist. Eccl.*, b. ii., c. 13.

They were wise, brave, and good men, according to the measure of Pagan goodness, who wrote these words. But they felt a horror of great darkness upon them when they looked into this mystery of existence ; they saw no light ; death were welcome as a bride, if death could end it all. Annihilation is the prayer of the Hindu heart. It is not the brutality and violence, but the intellect and spirit of the world,

which have fainted under the burden. The end of all man's speculations about the nature of existence and the mystery of its burden, has been reached in the cry which was wrung from one of the great ones of old, a model of uprightness, perfectness, and endurance, "The burden is too heavy: loose me, and let me go into the world where consciousness is lost for ever, where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest."



III.

The Pressure of the Burden on God.



"Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows."

ISAIAH LIII. 4.

"GOD" according to definitions, and "God" according to revelation, present some startling contrasts. The God of science and the God of faith manifest aspects which it is difficult to arrange in harmony. It is, in a measure, inevitable that it should be so, at least until the finite mind can comprehend the mystery of God. The Bible speaks to us of a God who lives, loves, hopes, grieves, sympathises, angers, and repents. The Book of Nature, read out by science, presents to us a great First Cause, whose one calm self-manifestation is the order of the world. The study of the law, and through

the law the mind of Him who ordained it, tends ever to enlarge and lift up our thoughts of the Being whom, meeting Him in revelation, we are tempted too readily to conceive of as after our own likeness. Is it too much for the devotees of science to believe, that the knowledge of the living Being whom revelation declares to us, is of infinite worth to them, enabling them to struggle successfully against a natural tendency to lose the Life in Law, the Being in the Sum of all the manifestations of force whose complete harmony is the universe; the order of which universe, the revelation of the living God in His man-ward relations, as unveiled in the Scripture, seems to the scientific eye, at first sight, to disturb, if not to destroy.

It is the very heart of those man-ward relations to which I call your earnest attention now.

My positions are these :—

I. The Lord—electing to perpetuate the sinful race, to endure all the sorrow which Heaven would look upon, and the question which would fall upon His government through the existence of a world so full of wrong and wretchedness, in a universe whose order was His charge—stooped at once, in

infinite, tender pity, to lift the burden, and to become a fellow-wayfarer in the sorrowful pilgrimage to which man had doomed himself by his sin.

This may seem strong language ; but if redemption means anything, it means this—God sharing from the first the burden of humanity, and taking on Himself the full pressure of the load which He still left to press upon the world. Remember that one word had ended the whole experiment. God had created man upright, free as an angel to serve Him. He had created him for Himself, to rule as His regent in this inferior world. And man elected not to be His regent. He elected to rule himself, and to defy God. He elected a life of discord with God and the creation ; he elected to be an instrument of confusion where God made him to be a key-stone of order, and most righteously the blow might have fallen, and the wrecks of the abortive experiment might have been crushed out into the everlasting night. None could have questioned the righteousness of the doom. The history would, in that case, simply have been that of an abortion, buried quickly out of sight, vanished from before the eye of the universe for ever.

But this was not the election of Heaven. God drove Adam forth into the wilderness, and ordained that he should beget sons in his own image, to be the heirs of his sinful nature, and to press on to its final issues of misery the experiment of freedom which he had begun. The sin being there, God elected not to destroy the sinner, but to spare him to be the parent of children who should work out the problem to the fatal issue, and drink the cup of bitterness which Adam's transgression had mingled for man, to the very dregs. That was God's decree. And now imagine that the decree had ended there—that no thought of redemption had entered into the mind of God. How if His decree had been that men were to be born, generation after generation, to sin and to suffer in an ever-widening circle of corruption and misery; the race rotting morally while multiplying physically, born, nursed, and buried, in an atmosphere of foul and fetid decay. Born, too, to sin and suffer thus by no election of their own, dependent on another's will for their very existence, an existence which must inevitably become a curse to them, a curse which they would never be able to shake off, which would blacken and deepen through

eternity. Picture this, it is a vision of horror. Terrible as the actual life of the world has been and is, even with the promise to light the present and irradiate the future, the vision of a world like this, doomed to live on without one gleam of hope, to rot without one pulse of regenerating life, would be purely horrible. This earth would then become the horror of horrors of the universe, and the God who could perpetuate a race to suffer these miseries would be a demon rather than a God. And to man ignorant of redemption, the author of this terrible world-system seems to be a demon. Devil-worship is the most powerful of the Pagan worships of the world.

Quite other and higher, and more godlike than man's highest idea of God, are His thoughts to us-ward. Dooming man to the sorrowful life of the wilderness, sparing him to sin and to suffer, and to be the parent of others who should sin and suffer, He stooped at once and lifted the burden which else had been crushing; and He made man understand, as He drove him forth from Eden, that He would meet him in the wilderness, would share its burdens, cares, and sorrows, and become his fellow in all but

the sin of the life to which he had been driven forth by his Lord. *"And unto Adam He said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* (Gen. iii. 17—19.)

I am persuaded that we make too little of the measure in which God entered into the life of man from the very hour of the transgression, as expressed in the text which I have just quoted. It seems a simple matter, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, but the serpent shall bruise his heel;" but it carries in its womb the whole history of redemption. Not a tear, not a groan, not a weary hour, not a toilsome journey, not a thankless gift of the Son of Man was forgotten when that promise was made to the race. The mother bending over the babe in the manger of the inn at Bethlehem, and meeting already in those young eyes a glance of

prophetic sorrow, which as a sword pierced her heart; the tear-stained, footsteps of the Man of Sorrows along the world's sad pathways; the swimming agony of the moment when the overstrung cords had reached their breaking strain, and the touch of an angel's hand enabled them to endure; the trembling, tottering steps which could hardly bear the self-devoted victim to the scene of His last agony; the horror of great darkness which fell on His soul, when God incarnate fainted, died, under the weight of the burden which He had lifted from the world; all these were before the eye of Him who, when He ordained that the sinful race should multiply sin and suffering if they would, until the world was filled with it, announced Himself as its Redeemer, and took the crushing burden on His own heart. In that hour, when man was bending in shame and anguish before Him, and tasting the bitter cup of which the coming generations should drink the dregs, He lifted it to His own lips. In that hour the Redeemer of man took it from the Father's hand: Bethlehem, Gethsemane, and Calvary, were already there in Eden to the Saviour's heart. Then said He, "*Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of*

me, I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart." Then the word was spoken, "*The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink of it:*" and then the strength was won which expressed itself in the prayer, "*Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. Nay, but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name.*" Whatever that hour of transgression had cost to Adam, it had cost more to the Lord. However heavily that life of sin and suffering pressed on Adam, there was One on whom it pressed more heavily, and who needed all His Divine strength to endure. When murder broke up the first human home, and Eve and Adam hung in speechless sorrow over the first revelation of what was meant by death, there was one who watched it from on high; whose home, too, had been rifled, whose earth already was red with the guilty blood-stains which would one day incarnadine its fairest plains. At once, as the responsible Lord and Keeper of men, He came forth to judge the murderer, and to take at once a sorrowful part in pressing forward the development of the human race. The day came when He could endure the spectacle no longer. I

have already spoken to you of the Deluge, and prayed you to imagine what burden that Fatherly heart had borne before the day of long-suffering patience was exhausted, and even He saw no remedy but the stroke of doom. The record is calm, collected, and stern as the word of a judge pronouncing sentence of death. But we too little think of the sorrow, the anguish, through which this stern necessity revealed itself. "It is a ruler judging his rebels," we say; "a swift, sharp stroke, and it is over, and his kingdom is the better and quieter for their death." Yes! this is a part of the truth. But that Ruler was One who, even then, had already offered that sacrifice in His heart, which, when it was revealed at length, appeared the very fervour of tenderness, the very prodigality of love. "*God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet rebels Christ died for us.*" "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*" "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.*" The love was there in that Ruler's heart already. Consider how fully He shared with Noah the burden, nay, bore it as Noah could never bear it, as He watched daily the godless

conversation of the wicked, and saw the hour approaching when even His love could find no longer a reason to spare.

And this, brethren, is the key to history. God was grieved with Egypt, He was grieved with Canaan, above all He was grieved with Israel; but it was the old grief with which Adam had filled His heart. Take this touching picture as the key to God's dealings:—"I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them according to His mercies, and according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so He was their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them. Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the Sea with the shepherd of His flock? where is He

that put His Holy Spirit within Him? That led them by the right hand of Moses with His glorious arm, dividing the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name? That led them through the deep, as an horse in the wilderness, that they should not stumble? As a beast goeth down into the valley, the Spirit of the Lord caused him to rest: so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name." (Isaiah lxiii. 7—14.)

Even then, closer than a mother's relation to a nursling, was God's relation to mankind. Nothing of all the sin, the wrong, the wretchedness, which filled earth with wailing, failed to reach and grieve His heart. For His love is so true and tender, though He be the High and Lofty One inhabiting eternity, that the tiniest human nursling is dear to Him as no star is dear. "*He feeds His flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs with His arm, and folds them in His bosom, and gently leads those that are with young.*" Realize what to Him has been through the ages the burden of all this wrong and anguish with which Adam's transgression has filled His world. I again say that the laws by which man exists are His work. Every human infant born into the world comes into it ultimately from His hand. Each

moment renews the first election, to let man live on, and see for himself that sin is deadly; to let him try the path which he had chosen, and press it to the bitter end. And the election is a burden, not to man only, but also to Heaven and to God.

Suffering sin to live on and reproduce itself, with all its bitter fruits, in the universe which He made to be so blest, He needs must become its sacrifice; making the atonement for the sin which He did not on the moment crush, and bearing the burden of the sorrow which He did not at once destroy. And this is Divine love. It must share the sorrow which it allows to live on, though the fountain of the sorrow be a sin which it hates; it must lift and bear the burden which most righteous necessities lay heavily upon erring souls. We none of us know, even dimly, what is meant by "Emmanuel," "God with us." God always with us, incarnate from the hour when He announced Himself as the woman's seed, and the destroyer of her foe. God with us, our fellow in all the dread experience into which our sharing in the sin of Adam has driven us; knowing Himself the full pressure of its burdens and infinitely more nearly touched than we are by

everything that concerns the dark, sad history of mankind.

II. The fellowship of God with the race in the very hour of the transgression, infused at once a tincture of hope into the experience of the sinner, and made it, from the first, a discipline unto life instead of a judgment unto death.

We talk often rashly enough of the first curse. The curse is on the serpent, on the ground—everywhere but on man. There is no curse to the man who suffers in hope. The aim of God, in the hour of the first misery of the parents of our race, was to embreathe a hope into their wounded and stricken hearts. The forbidden fruit, like a serpent's bite, had struck its poison into the springs of their blood. Their eyes were opened, a new world was unveiled, but all was strange, and chill, and drear. They had won a new kingdom, but they were stricken with a death-like languor through all their blood. It was as though they had touched its sceptre but to die. They cowered in the coverts of the garden wounded, smitten; they shrank from God, from light, from all that had made the brightness of their home. Death had already set his cold seal upon

their brow ; they knew good and evil, but they knew, in the same instant, as the poison stole through their veins, that they were beginning to die. A great horror of dismay and anguish would seize them as they looked forth on this new and unknown world of which they had forced the entrance—the untrodden wilderness of freedom, on the edge of which, by one daring act, they had set their steps. We can understand how the darkness settled on the soul of Adam, when he realized at length that he had become his own master in his own world ; a world whose moral features, within limits, he might mould and finish according to his own will. “*Ye shall be as gods.*” They felt, as they gazed forth from the gate of their happy Eden, over the wide, wild, unhomelike world, which was all their own, how awful was the height which they had scaled, how terrible was the endowment they had won. As the night fell shuddering over their first wilderness shelter, these “would-be gods” would moan like lost children in the darkness, and pray to be taken home again into their peaceful Paradise, and rest once more under the shield of the visible hosts of the Lord. But the night

brought back no responses. The morning showed them no backward path. Eden was lost to them, and lost to them for ever. They were out there alone, alone, with the death-shiver already in their blood, and around them a wilderness. And then the promise rose like a moon on their darkness; a soft light of Heavenly pity and love shone down on their night of sorrow. It prophesied a dawn when the great Sun, the Sun of their Eden, should again rise and shine upon their world.

The promise changed at once and absolutely the character of their wilderness discipline. Man has been the child of hope, of a Divine hope, from the very hour of his transgression. The first word which the Lord uttered to the sinner announced the commencement of a moral struggle and effort, the burden of which would rest on God. It would end in the destruction of that death which had already stricken man as its victim; and in the opening of a new home beyond the wide, drear wilderness, in which Eden itself would be forgotten, its quiet happiness eclipsed for ever by the transporting joys of Heaven. As Adam took that hope into his heart, and measured the meaning of the

Divine promise, he realized that God had literally cast in His lot with man, and was with him in the wilderness—not watching but tending his development, not pitying but sharing his sorrow, not surveying but fighting his battles, making man's enemy His enemy, man's hope His hope, man's deliverance, salvation, and glory His end. Then a light holier than the sunlight of Eden would steal over the waste; and, ere the last gleam of the glory which had gilded the bowers of Eden had faded, the far distance would begin to glow with an intenser lustre, and reveal, as Canaan was revealed from Pisgah's crest, the broad sunlit world which was to be the home of souls made perfect by suffering—the rest which remaineth when all the struggle and anguish which God had stooped to share should be ended, and the fruits of the Divine discipline should be for ever won.

And this hope, which rises not out of the promise only, but out of the oldest fact in man's history, the Incarnation, is, as I have said, the thread of light entwined with the woof of man's experience—the royal thread of the fabric of God. This hope, born of God, and kept alive by Him in the darkness of

the world's night, is the one thing on earth and in man which has made his life and his history something else than a long death-agony, tended by the devil with the gospel of despair. It had been that, but that God has planted and kept alive in the great heart of humanity a hope which the devil has never been able to kill, whose root is Emmanuel, God with us. The measure in which any age or any soul has got its eye on the light which then was kindled, the hope which then was set before man, is the measure in which it has been able to hold out against the devil, and in the strength of God to spoil him of his prey. What this measure may have been in the dark night of ante-Christian or Pagan ages, is a deep mystery. We know not. It is a dreary and, to the eye of sense, a sad history—the development of man, even under the inspiration of this fellowship of God. But the Apostle's language in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, as well as the whole scope of Scripture, justifies us in believing that the Redemption which is by Christ Jesus, covers the whole dealings of God with man, from the first hour of his history to the last consummation. And God sees the hope, the

turning to the light though feebly and from afar, when it escapes our sight. Elijah thought that there was but one faithful one left in his day; God had seven thousand who had never bowed the knee to Baal, even in the darkest hour of Israel's history: and He has His eye on these prisoners of hope where we never dream of searching for them, in every country and in every age of the world.

III. This first promise to man, this fellowship of God with the sinning, suffering race, whose existence He perpetuated, pledged Him to the sacrifice of Calvary, the baptism of Pentecost, and the abiding of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, with the world. "Emmanuel" meant—God on Calvary. There alone could the whole hope of man be realized, the whole promise of God be fulfilled. The God who stooped to share the burden, must at length bear it wholly and bear it away. Having endured sin in the world, and before His face, having taken charge of the future of a sinful race, He must make the full atonement for them. He must become their sacrifice; and the sentence of death which eternal necessities imposed, He must, if He would spare them, execute on Himself. Sin being made exceed-

ing sinful by His revelation of the law, He must endure the sentence of that law, that its sinfulness in His sight might appear to all, and be stamped into the history of the universe for ever. The race which He had taken into the fellowship of His compassionate love, being dead in sins, He must, not teach, not guide, not help only, but quicken, if He would save ; unless He could give a new mind, a new heart, a new life to the world, He had lifted the burden of its sin and misery in vain. The whole economy of grace, as we call it, the atoning sacrifice, the quickening Spirit, the reigning Mediator on the throne, comes forth in virtue of that one promise which changed the misery of man the sinner into a discipline instead of a doom. From that gate of Eden whence Adam gazed shuddering over the wilderness, Calvary was already in sight ; yea, and beyond Calvary, on the dim outer edge of the wilderness which bore the cross on its rude breast, a golden radiance might be seen. It was the dawning of that eternal day of Restitution, when Adam, lost in Eden, restored in Christ, shall lead the line of his ransomed sons, clothed in triumphal robes, and crowned, to present them before Him of whom

he was the figure, and in whom the likeness which he lost is restored, transfigured, and glorified, the supreme celestial form through eternity. And, methinks, even in that hour of transgression, the fallen man might have caught the prelude of that exulting strain, which shall break like a flood of glorious harmony, as the voice of waters, and the voice of thunders, around the throne of the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, when the triumph of Calvary is complete, "*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ; blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.*"

And then shall the Divine image be revealed in man. In the denizen of Eden it was but in embryo. In the pilgrim of the wilderness it was dark with shame and foul with sin. In the Man of Sorrows, the glory of manhood was unveiled, but the stain of tears was upon it, and the shadow of a great agony ; in the Son of Man enthroned at God's right hand it shall at length be manifest, in the day of manifestation of the Son, and the sons ; and then, and never till then, shall the prophecy of the form which was God's likeness in Eden be fulfilled,

and the universe comprehend what God meant by Man.

And now, what is the deadly, damning sin of man? What is it which God's mercy cannot compassionate, and God's redemption cannot save? Not the nature which we bring into the world, not the infirmities and sins which grow out of it. The Lord bears witness against these in tones which, though full of tender compassion, are full of an awful warning, for the end of these things is death. But these are but the fringes, as it were, of the essentially deadly sin, the sin which man makes for himself within the laboratory of his own life. It grows not out of infirmities of nature, but out of that malignant perverseness of heart into which the indulgence of the desires of the flesh and of the mind inevitably hardens at length. Everywhere, everywhen, from the first hour of man's transgression, to the last hour of the existence of the world, "*Herein is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*" God made man to be redeemed; and "*God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.*" The resisting that purpose,

the refusing that reconciliation, the loving sin more than the merciful Saviour, the hell of self-will rather than the blessed and glorious Heaven which is opened through the Gospel—this is the crowning, the damning sin, the sin from which there can be no release.

“The deaf may hear the Saviour’s voice,
The fettered tongue in silence break,
But the deaf heart, the dumb by choice,
The laggard soul that will not wake,
The guilt that scorns to be forgiven,
These baffle even the spells of Heaven.”

The sin of humanity is the rejection of its Saviour. This is the sin which man knows to be his own, the fruit of his free-will, the full, deliberate election of his spirit, the burden of which he must bear eternally.

The turning away from any light of God which is shining in him, the resisting of the Holy Spirit who is striving even in the children of disobedience, the closing of the door of the heart against the Light of the World, the Man of Sorrows, who is standing there amid all its tangled weeds and briars, and pleading for an entrance—these make the true and final damnation. The eye which can bear that glance without melting into tenderness,

the heart that remains bare and dry under the blessed dew of that love, the form that can stand before the Cross and make light of those dying agonies, and can trample under foot as an unholy thing, that most precious blood—these make the second and utter death.



IV.

Abounding Sin : Overabounding Grace.



"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."—ROMANS V. 21, 21.

THESE words of St. Paul unfold to us some daring as well as profound thoughts. "*The law entered that the offence might abound.*" And God sent it ; God would have the offence abundant. The sin was already there. Deep in the constitution of humanity the poison was already working, and God would have it developed, in broad, full, strong manifestation. The driving of evil out to the surface, where all can see it in the broad daylight, is, as in some deadly forms of fever, the first step towards

the cure. But there is the revelation of a daring as well as a powerful intellect in the broad simplicity of the statement. "*The law entered that the offence might abound.*" Paul had not ventured to entertain the thought unless he had known, as no other man has ever known, the superabounding, the overmastering power of grace.

The infinite tenderness of God to sinners is the broad and blessed fact of the Gospel. To the uttermost, to the lowest depth of wickedness and misery, to the crumbling edge of the pit of perdition, to the last step, the last cry, the last gasp, He is able, willing, waiting, with intense desire to save. God's utter hatred of sin, and His fixed determination to uproot sin, lie, if I may so speak, underneath the everlasting Gospel. By righteousness alone, God's righteousness, can a soul be saved. But if sin be there in the heart let it work itself out, let the poison spread through the whole system, let the corruption taint the whole world, then grace shall reach it, grace shall rule it, grace shall cure and save its victims; and so, "where sin abounded unto death, grace shall reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

• I suppose that the problem of problems, the difficulty of difficulties, the question over which souls have agonized through the long night, is, how can a righteous and loving God endure and even perpetuate the existence of a world like this? God has not made it as it is. God made man upright, and the world an Eden. But God upholds it as it is; a touch, a breath, would abolish its sin and misery for ever. But it lives on; and, generation after generation, "the cry of the human," the cry of souls lost in darkness and writhing in pain, the shouts of the combatants, the moans of the wounded, the plaint of the wronged, the curses of the desperate, are rising up into the ear of God. Glorious and beautiful things God also looks upon; brave words, noble deeds, angelic ministries; but at what cost? God knoweth at what cost great deeds are done, and great ministries are accomplished in a world like this—and God alone! Life—the life of a human spirit—is, as we have said above, an awful endowment. By no act of ours it comes to us. It is forced upon us by a superior will, and struggle as we may, madden as we may, we can never lay it down. We must have it and hold it, and

all the issues that spring out of it, through eternity.

And the influences which mould it are but partially under the control of our hand. There is a man who was educated to be a jail-bird from his infancy. He never had his young eye upon the form of a nobler life. You cannot say that there are no seeds of great thoughts and great virtues in him. He would be torn limb from limb before he would betray his comrade in crime. But his chance in life has been a poor one compared with yours. His whole life is a battle with society ; he has a dim notion that that is his vocation ; and society masters him, chains him, and will infallibly crush him at last. Released for a moment from its iron grasp, in a week another daring crime has brought him again within its toils. His life is but a long misery, with no hope. And yet that man must live, must drag on his burden ; and passionately as he may long to die, body and soul, and have done with thought and feeling for ever—and who hears the cries that go up from dens of vice and prison-cells ?—it is God's will that, for good or for ill, he shall bear the burden of that life through eternity. He may mend his life ;

God's mercy puts that within his reach; but one thing God has settled for him absolutely. that if he will not mend it, he shall bear it, bear it for ever and for ever.

How many myriads, how many millions of men are there, in any given generation, who, were the choice offered to them to live on as they are living, or to die at once, body, soul, and spirit, would answer, "Let me die and have done with it for ever." Annihilation has been the supreme hope of many a creed which has had wide influence with men. And why? Because "*Sin reigneth unto death*" everywhere. Life is good: the world is fair. The storms, deserts, and earthquakes, would have no terror for man if there were not wilder storms and barer deserts within. Life were blessed in such a goodly world, if a man could but be freed from the terror of himself. But self haunts him as a spectre. "*The things that I would, those I do not; the things that I would not, those do I;*" and the doing these things is death. Every day, every hour, man has forced on him the fact that, in some way, the responsibility of which he cannot shift off on God, he is out of harmony with his world, and in deadly discord with

himself. And the sin reigns. Everywhere out of the sphere of grace, the revelation of the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, the cry is heard, "*O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" Here, then, are men by millions, living by no will of their own, bound to live whether they will or no, fighting a losing battle through life ; or refusing to fight it, and giving it up in despair, grovelling with the beasts, cursing with the fiends, filling the world with woe and wailing, and fattening its fairest plains with the blood of mangled and slaughtered men. Doubtless, there are a thousand lights as well as shadows in the picture. Here and there, even in Pagandom, there is a gleam of light so bright as to seem to have strayed down from the inner glory. But looking at the broad world, the shadow masters the sunlight. Life is tragic. The daily lives of millions of our brother men is such that we should shudder at the prospect of living it. Take one day's honest service with a city missionary even in Christian England, and judge for yourselves. Nay, look behind the robes of the noblest peers and mightiest princes, and see with what heart-weariness they drag themselves through

the round of their accustomed toils. "Sin reigns unto death." There is the "struggle for life" everywhere; but Death, if want, disease, and misery, are his lictors, everywhere wins the mastery, and parades the symbols of his reign.

Death is the broad term which covers the whole work of sin. Death is but the culmination of a process; all that leads to it is a part of the dying. The sickness, the weakness, the faintness of the powers, physical or spiritual; the dulling of the sensations, the collapse of the faculties, the satisfaction with lower and yet lower objects and pleasures, each of them exhausted in turn, as body and soul drop down to a still lower grade; the gradual extinction of all the energies and affections; the eclipse of everything which makes life worth the living, worth the having—this is death, and death is the hall-mark of sin, and you may trace it broad and deep over the whole human world. A world dead in sin, yet doomed never to die—for existence under such conditions is the most awful of all dooms. And there is no refuge, save for a moment, in the thought that God is merciful, and will not by too heavy a hand of punishment make existence an

eternal curse to the souls who but dimly knew the will they defied. But what is the punishment of a spirit? What matters a lighter or heavier burden to a man, whose chief torment is himself—the sin which is in him, and which reigns in him unto death. All the tortures whose forms Dante ever chiselled in word, or Orcagna ever preached in colour, would be gladly welcomed by the poor lost spirit, if they could but heal the welling wound, or soothe the gnawing misery within. The sinner carries his torment with him—a life poisoned at the springs, a life which God will not suffer him to lay down; though he pray with an agony of prayer to be rid of it, it is his, and he must bear it eternally. Hence the raging passion, the bitter strife, the burning hate, the weary misery, that wastes the world. It is all the hell-born reign of Death.

And Paul has the daring sentence, “The law, sent of God, entered that the offence might abound.” Many, startled, try to soften the words. “God hath sent the law to correct, but its result was the increase of sin,” is the sense to which they would modify it. But the words will not bear it, and the argument refuses to adopt it. God sent the law

that the offence might abound, knowing that it would abound, and intending that it should abound. Not sin—that is, the sinful thought and purpose—but the offence, the act and manifestation of sin. God intended it to abound. The poison there, it should not lurk there; it should be pressed into full development; it should break out in the plague-sores of vice and misery which overspread the world; while within, deep in the fountains of the life, He would be embreathing by grace that quickening power which would drive it forth, not *to* the surface, but *through* the surface, and cast it out for ever. This is the apostle's thought; and its affirmation is conspicuously sustained by history.

“The law entered.” “The Mosaic law,” say cautious commentators, “with all its minute regulations, difficult and impossible to fulfil, which made men despair of legal obedience, and prepared them to receive the righteousness which is by faith.” I think the larger view the true one. All law, all manifestation of God's commandment, in any form, in a sin-loving, God-hating world, has for its first fruit the insurrection of human passion and self-will. Every declaration of the character and the will of

God to sinners seems at first but to madden the spirit and blacken the tone of their transgression. "Sin by the commandment becomes exceeding sinful." It is true of all dispensations of law, and all revelations of God, even the highest. When men saw the Father in the Son they hated Him; and the hatred of the generation to which the revelation was made, broke out in the most deadly, damning crime in the history of the universe. "*Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know : Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*" The revelation reprov'd, and by reprov'g maddened the sinner. Only when the grace, the love, with which the revelation was charged, penetrated, as light, and air, and heat, and dew, can penetrate, the hard crust of their natures—a grace and love made conspicuous by the abounding offence, by the master-crime, in which the transgression culminated—only then could men begin to understand the counsel developed in the text. "*Moreover the law entered, that the offence might*

abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto life eternal by Jesus Christ our Lord." Every manifestation of light at first seems but to reveal darkness. Every manifestation of God at first seems but to deepen and darken sin. The great revelation developed the great transgression, and through that, "grace has reigned, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." It is the way of God; like all His ways, wonderful and past finding out. Transgression driven to act itself out, and brought thereby more fully within reach of healing influences. The great transgression being the great crisis, the grand turning-point in the moral history of the world. It was over the prodigal—was it not?—the poor, barefoot, reckless prodigal come home, and not over the correct and calculating elder, that they sang, "*It is meet that we should make merry and be glad: for this thy son was dead, but he is alive again; he was lost, but he is found.*"

Let us consider as follows:—

I. Grace.

II. The relation between grace and sin.

III. The relation between grace and righteousness.

IV. The complete and final end of God.

I. Grace.

Here are the two antagonists—grace and sin. Both would be kings; one only has the power to reign. Grace is not just synonymous with love, though love is at the heart of it. It is love in a certain relation—the love of a Redeemer working to its ends. It represents the whole sum of the forces and influences by which the love that would redeem aims at the accomplishment of its hope. Its incarnation is Christ. The Lord Christ is the gift of grace; the glory of Christ is the glory of grace; at His coronation-day grace will be crowned. *“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how, though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be made rich.”* Grace is the manifestation and action of that fatherly love—yea, to the prodigal and rebellious also—which could not rest in its native glory and blessedness, while one prodigal was wandering, hungry and footsore, in the wilderness; while one tear was wept, one groan was uttered in the universe, which its suffering and sacrifice might spare. It is

the love with which a father pities, and bears with, and seeks to bring home a truant; with which a gracious king would kill treason at the heart. A pleading, patient, yearning love; whose only measures are the weary journeys of the Man of Sorrows about the earth's sad pathways, and the tear-drops, the blood-drops, that bestain His steps; the agony of effort to endure a pressure which was beyond all mortal bearing; the horror of darkness which gathered round His spirit as the burden of the Cross fell on Him; the anguish that rent, that literally burst His heart, as the prayer for His murderers broke from His lips, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" Ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus, but the measure of it One only knows. That grace is the conqueror of sin. That triumphs where law fails. That is the force, the overmastering force, which the Lord has won—I use the word with reverence, has won by sacrifice and suffering; whereby and wherefore He bears, or seems to bear, with such strange patience, all the wrong and the woe of the world. He bore it, He bears it, because He foresaw that where sin *multiplied* (the term abounding is kept for grace), grace would (not

"much more," the term is superlative, not comparative) very mightily, most mightily *abound*; so "*that as sin hath reigned unto death, grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.*"

II. The relation between grace and sin.

1. Sin is the condition of its manifestation. No sin, no grace, and none of that special glory which grace alone can win—the glory of the Redemption of the world. We are on difficult ground here; but Paul treads with bold as well as careful steps. It is sin that calls grace to action. Through a lost world Christ is to win His most glorious crown. The thought may again rise here in some minds, "Then it is all God's work, both the sin and the salvation. He made the sin, that He might make the salvation. The two are His complete thought, the one essential to the other, as two hemispheres complete a world." There is confusion of thought here; God cannot make sin, for it would cease to be sin if He made it. He cannot make man to sin. Again, it would cease to be sin if it was the inevitable result of any act or thought of God. He made man upright and free; He saw the choice of freedom, He foresaw sin reign-

ing unto death. He perpetuates man, and upholds the world in which sin riots, that grace may have time and room. Sin being born by man's will into the world, a higher order of things, a higher life for man, a richer glory for God, becomes possible, through the abounding wealth and power of that grace which, but for transgression, had ever remained pent up, without vent or flow in His heart. Grace and sin are the twin antagonists; opposed as heat and cold, light and darkness, cosmos and chaos. If one reigns, the other is destroyed; and God suffers sin to be born because He knows that grace can conquer it, strip its spoils, and reign in triumph over worlds which His victory has glorified eternally.

2. There is a glory which no fiat of Omnipotence even can create, which grace, by the conquest of sin, can win and wear through eternity.

No sin, no grace, and, in the highest sense, no glory. The joy of the prodigal come home, the joy of the father in his return; these are the glorious joys of earth, of Heaven. Some of you have prodigals wandering far; your love clings to them still, and draws them with a magnetism which, like all mightiest things, is invisible, to your side. The

moment when you clasp them once more and seat them by your hearth-fire, will be the culminating joy of your pilgrimage here. It is the earthly share of the great joy and glory of Heaven. God Himself pictures it. The father had two sons. His relation to the one is peaceful, happy, contented :—“ *And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment.*” Rights and claims are recognized on both sides, and duties are fulfilled. But there is no glow about it ; the light is that of a cold wintry day ; all is right, just, and sound, but there is no enthusiasm, no passionate exuberant joy filling the house with songs. We must turn to the other picture for that :—“ *And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the Father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him ; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet : And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it ; and let us eat, and be merry : For this my son was dead, and is alive again ;*

he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry."

There is a child who has learnt what a father's love is worth by the loss of it; the value of daily bread, by pining hunger; of the holy order of a home, by squalor, filth, and rags. He has learnt more. He knows now how long the fatherly heart can cling to the wanderer; how deeply the child's image is stamped into the father's love; how quickly the aged eye lights up when the dear form, though in dust and rags, appears in the distance; how, even a great way off, the father's tenderness clasps him, and brings him home; how the house has a new joy, the home a new glory, when he enters it; how it rings out a welcome, and pours its treasures at his feet; and how the father and child restored in that solemn and holy union, of which the bands are a father's grace and a son's passionate tenderness and devotion, find that in each other of which the son, at any rate, had not dared even to dream.

The one picture is Adam in Eden, the other is Adam in Heaven.

III. The relation between grace and righteousness. Grace must reign through righteousness, if it reign at all. Imputed righteousness, some cry;

inherent righteousness, others. Neither the one nor the other, I venture to think. The Apostle has a broader meaning, which covers both. Inherent righteousness is a vain show, if it be not rooted in a higher righteousness, in the perfect righteousness ; while imputed righteousness is a mere fiction, if no image of itself be generated in the soul. Righteousness ! Sin is the condition of grace on the one hand, righteousness on the other. Without sin it has no object, without righteousness it has no way to its end. The broad principle here, and I can only deal with the broad principle, may be thus expressed :—

1. None but a righteous soul can be a blessed soul.

2. The righteousness of grace has a glory and a blessedness all its own.

1. The righteous soul alone is blessed.

To some, grace may suggest another idea. Mercy, compassion, gentleness, to the sinner ; a kindly passing over his transgression, and a remission of the penalty which it had incurred. I say again, that were feasible enough if a man's worst torment and curse were not himself. Pardon is a slight thing to a man who cannot pardon himself. "Go in peace,

be happy," were but an idle word to the man who bears about the elements of a deadly discord, a crushing misery within. The man wants to be at one with himself, by finding all his powers and passions at one with God. "*Unite my heart to fear thy name,*" is his persistent cry. "Unloose my bands and let me be free; expel the poison and let me live." The problem to be solved is within; there the fountain of bitter waters has to be healed. There a law of God is inscribed on fleshly tablets, and it is exigent of its honour; a law which tells him, with a tone which all the voices of the universe hushing him to peace could not master, that till he can love and begin to live it, sin is reigning in him, and must reign unto death. And it is there that grace reigns through righteousness. An inward harmony, an inward healing, an inward quickening is its promise; it presents to him a righteousness which is as a man's righteousness, and yet is God's; a righteousness which he can believe in and love; a righteousness not awfully, hopelessly above him; a righteousness at hand, and not afar off; a righteousness which, while his sad worn heart drinks in, as deserts drink in the dew, the love which streams from the dying sacrifice on

Calvary, enters with love's "joyous entry," and enshrines itself in his heart.

2. The righteousness which is by grace has a glory and blessedness which is all its own. Grace reigns through righteousness; it is a joyous, glorious reign. The work of grace is to shrine righteousness in man's heart of hearts; to teach him not to obey it only, not to honour it only, but to love it; to love it with a passion that would die for it, as He loved it whose coronation anthem thus was sung:—
"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." It is not the shadow of His own perfect righteousness, which is unto all and upon all them that believe, which God seeks to behold everywhere. Not the shadow, but as it were the branches, spreading everywhere with a heart of life in them, and filling with living greenness the world. The righteousness came and was incarnate, that men might love it, yea, with a lover's passion. Loving Christ, clasping Christ, it is God's own righteousness which man loves and holds. Through love, he

has a joy in all righteous thoughts and righteous deeds, which is part of his joy in Christ his Saviour. It is the Lord's life, into the fellowship of which he is entering; it is the Lord's great end which he is learning to pursue; it is the Lord's glory, the glory of the Redeemer, whose love has won a world to righteousness, whose lustre he is making more intense and resplendent; it is the Lord's joy, the joy of Christ in His righteous redeemed ones, of which He is filling the high measure through eternity. Grace can only bless through righteousness. The righteousness of grace has a glory and a blessedness all its own.

IV. The complete and final end of God. "*Unto eternal life.*"

Death is simply isolation. The cutting the body off from free communion with its world. The eye can no more drink in the sunlight, the lungs the vital air, the stomach the vital food. They are there all around it, but it is dead to them, cut off from all communion and ministry. Thrown on its own internal resources it preys on itself, wastes itself until there is no more to waste, and then drops down into the rottenness and nothingness of the grave.

And what is life ? The opposite of isolation. It is the faculty of communion with all things—receiving their tributes, and repaying them with fruits. The intensity of this power of communion—of the eye to commune with the light, of the ear to commune with the music of the world, of the lungs to draw down into the deep recesses of the frame the universal air—is the measure of the life of the body. Nor is it otherwise with the life within. The soul's death is the paralysis of its faculty to all that a soul was made to commune with, till it becomes without truth, righteousness, and holiness, without God and without hope, because without life. The soul's quickening is the rekindling of the energy of its powers, the re-occupation of the glorious range of its faculty to commune with, to possess, and to enjoy all that God has made a soul to live for, all whereby a soul may live eternally.

The work of grace is as the baptism of a new life for man. The eye kindles again when it feels the inspiration, the blood glows, the limbs and organs of the spirit brace themselves to new vigour and swiftness, while a solemn joy fills the heart, which is unspeakable and full of glory. Alive to God ! alive

to all this goodly universe ! alive to all the splendour and bliss of the new creation, which God will bring forth from the womb of the death to which all things haste that they may rise transfigured ; above all, alive to Him ! This is the vision which He sets before Himself, beyond all the woe and the wrong of Time. The innumerable company of the living, living as He lives, and able to live like Him, who shall come forth from the great tribulation of earth, to fill His New Jerusalem with songs, to crowd His new creation with sons ; prodigals come home, who shall love Him with a passionate devotion, and serve Him with a joyous energy, whose springs shall renew themselves at the fountain of His love eternally:—“ *And I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder : and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps : and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders : and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*” One

hundred and forty and four thousand ; a square number, symmetrical with the Divine idea. How far that idea stretches who shall dare to guess ? There is the vision. “ *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain ;* ” there is the song. This is what the Saviour sees and hears beyond the wastes of time. And then, then, when the whole company is gathered home, and the Father’s house is ringing with the songs of the return, then will all which has filled the earth with wailing be forgotten ; then will He who bore the shame and agony of Calvary see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied ; then will the memory of the joy and beauty of Eden be eclipsed for ever in the excelling splendour and bliss of Heaven.

“ *Lord, are there few that be saved ?* ” The Lord gives no answer but the text. This we know, that the end which God foresees shall repair all the waste, and repay all the sorrow with which sin has filled the world. How wide, how vast, how glorious this work of overabounding grace, which of us may dare to guess ? “ *But strive thou to enter in at the strait gate.* ” The end for which the Redeemer is waiting, the issue for which Heaven is hoping, depend in their measure upon you. You can frustrate,

you can forward the great consummation. You can cross, or you can carry into more glorious completeness, the eternal counsel of the Father, that "where sin abounded grace should much more abound; that as sin had reigned unto death, even so should grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Have you learnt the notes of that new song which none but the redeemed can know? Is Christ the joy and hope of your being? Is freedom from sin, a larger, freer, purer, more Christlike life, the one pining desire of your heart? Be patient, then, and still brace yourself to hope and to endure. Fight the good fight of faith; endure the hardness of the present discipline; lift the cross and bear it bravely to the end; for God's eye foresees the day which from yours is veiled, the day of universal deliverance, the day of restitution of all things, the day of the unveiling of the new creation, where grace, having cast out sin, shall have enthroned righteousness for ever—the day of the manifestation of the sons of God.



V.

The Penitent's Creed.



"He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, I have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."—JOB XXXIII. 27, 28.

I NEVER open the Book of Job without fresh wonder at the wealth of Christian thought and feeling which it contains. There is a deep sense in which Christianity is older than the Incarnation. The Word *was* from the beginning, not in solitary majesty and splendour, but "rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and His delights were with the sons of men." The day is older than the dawn, because the sun is older than both of them. The grand thoughts about God and man, about the soul, truth, righteousness, and holiness, which Colenso

and other searchers may find embedded in the mud of Pagan literature, mark the early dawning of that light of the sun of truth, the living Word, whose beams were in the fulness of time to shine with meridian splendour on the world. But man was made to live, not in the dawn, but in the daylight. The fact that there were foreshinings of the Advent, heralds of the expected One in all nations, but made it the more certain that the Desire of all Nations must at the appointed time appear. But there is one fountain both of the dawn and of the daylight; and what gleams of truth were shooting athwart the darkness of the Pagan sky, were the rays of that advancing sun.

Among the books of the Old Testament, in which the light was openly enshrined, none seems to me to shine with a fuller, steadier lustre than this Book of Job. It seems to lift itself high above the level of the surrounding darkness, and to catch, while night is on all the desert, the full glow of that dayspring which was rising to irradiate the world. The thoughts of it, the very idea of it, are Christian to the core. The Word, who was with God, but who was in the world from the beginning, was

with the man who wrote this book. It is Divine truth which it utters, it is Divine wisdom which it unfolds, it is Divine love which it reveals, as behind all the struggle and the suffering which God sends for the discipline of mankind. Nowhere is there a grander, clearer cry for a Mediator than in the sublime passage, "*For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both. Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me : then would I speak, and not fear Him ; but it is not so with me.*" And nowhere is there a more comprehensive description of his qualifications and office than in the very chapter from which I have taken my text. "*Behold, I am according to thy wish in God's stead : I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.*" There are those who believe that Elihu is the Mediator. That the Angel who dwelt in the bush, who was with the Church in the wilderness, with Joshua before Jericho, with Gideon by the threshing-floor, was, in the person of Elihu, with the patriarch—the daysman, the

man who could lay his hand upon both, the Emmanuel of Job. I cannot accept that view. Elihu is humanly partial and imperfect like the rest.* He has the freshness, the fire, the frank honesty of youth; while genius gives him an easy superiority over the dry moralities and antiquated formularies of the friends. But he falls short of the highest wisdom, though he is inspired to utter some of the deepest, truest, most blessed thoughts which are to be found in the whole word of God. There is the whole philosophy of mediation in the passage which I have just quoted. There is the whole philosophy of penitence in the text. The essential principles are all here. I know not anywhere a fuller exposition of the act of the soul in repenting than these words set forth. "*He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, I have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.*" I shall ask you to consider with me,

* There is a disposition now among critics, to regard Elihu as an interpolation. The reasons urged on critical grounds seem insufficient, while the book would lose a very important part of the argument if he were withdrawn.

I. The creed of penitence.

II. The confession of penitence.

III. The fruit of penitence through the redeeming mercy and grace of God.

I. The creed of penitence.

1. An absolute good and evil, right and wrong.

There are those in whose sight the burden of a guilty conscience is but a bad form of hypochondria. The agony of a soul under a sense of its sin, of the tyranny which it exercises, and the misery which it works, is for such but a morbid condition of the system; as Mr. Emerson somewhere says, "The mumps and measles of the soul," needing a wise physician, rather than the blood of atonement; time and a good constitution, rather than a Divine cure. There are many able men in our country at this day, "who profess and call themselves Christians," and who take a busy part in all the higher activities and movements of our times, who simply smile at the experience of a guilt-burdened sinner; who, if you speak to them of the witness of the human conscience to God's righteousness and holiness as demanding an atonement—of the impossibility of peace, except on the conditions which God

has laid down in His word—of the unrest and misery of a spirit which, conscious not of transgression only, but of a fatal proneness to transgress, not of sins only but of *sin*, has never been brought by faith into the peace of God—will tell you that it is a mere delusion, a morbid moral state, to be treated seriously and even reverently as a solemn reality to the sufferer, but having no other reality, no ground in the mind of God toward the sinner, and the way of God in the forgiveness of souls. They tell us that if a man can but feel that all this care and pain is foolish and useless, throw himself on the simple goodness of God to forget the past, and strive to do better for the future, that is all that God requires—then all is well, all is peace.

It is not the creed of the penitent; and while the world lasts, the penitent's creed will express the conviction and feeling of mankind. "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*" "*There is no man that doeth good, and sinneth not.*" "*Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O Lord God, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*" "*Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son.*"

At the root of this creed lies the conviction which I am considering in this head of my discourse. Right and wrong, good and evil, are fixed and absolute opposites. Opinions of men may vary, the good of one country may be the evil of another, the right of one age may be the wrong of the next, but the things themselves do not vary; they abide immutable, because there is One who knows them and before whom they are real, who abides immutable; and they, receiving not sanctions or judgments from men, are the judges of men, and settle it absolutely for men whether it shall be well with them or no. A Malay may believe that it is good to be a thief, so that the thieving be done cleverly. An Englishman may believe that it is good to be honest. It is not a matter of indifference to the inner as well as to the outer life of the one and of the other whether they change convictions or no, so that they adopt them thoroughly. The one stands so far square with the law which rules the great universe, in tune with all things around him, and in the way of their blessings; while the other is in contempt of that law, in collision with all realities around him, seen and unseen,

and in the way of their curse. The devil may try to persuade us it is all one. It is two, and two for ever. There is a right which is God's rule in the soul, and in the universe; there is a wrong which is the devil's counterfeit of God's rule. All the force of Heaven, were it put forth, could not make the wrong beautiful and blessed; all the force of Hell could not make the right foul and accursed. The one remains the principle of order and the fountain of blessing to all intelligent creatures, the other the source of sorrow and the principle of discord. For them to change their essential natures is as impossible as for God to change. Equally impossible is it for man to escape their judgments. He that doeth righteously shall be blessed, he that doeth unrighteously shall be cursed, in any age, in any country, in any world. The idea that it does not matter much what a man believes so that he believes it heartily, justified as it seems to be by the number of good men of all creeds that you meet with, cannot stand. In the first place, it is impossible in a large sense of the term, in the only true sense of the term, to get at the whole creed of a man. Just as there are unwritten laws which

have their sphere of power, so there are unspoken, unspeakable beliefs haunting the inner chambers of every man's nature, which make his uttered creed a very partial representation of that belief which moulds his life. Then practically, and very much in virtue of these unspoken beliefs, a man's formal creed, that by which you label him in your catalogue, may bear a very imperfect relation indeed to his moral and spiritual state before God as a lover of truth and righteousness. He may be better or worse than his creed would justify you in supposing, and in spite of it. Again, there are limits of divergence of opinion and judgment on moral and spiritual questions, within which their effect on the character, though real, is as difficult to trace as a law of storms in the variable belt of the world's atmosphere; while beyond those limits you may trace the reflex action of belief very readily indeed. You may say in the same way of a healthy man, that it does not much matter what he eats. There are limits within which it is true; but if he take to straying beyond those limits and eat arsenic or nightshade, it matters everything; it becomes, even to the healthiest, matter of life or of death.

and thus it is with the right, the good, and the true. They are absolute and unchangeable in their essence. Man does not make them. The solemn expression of the opinion of a world cannot unmake them. All the forces of the universe would be too weak to bar an obedient soul, nation, or world, from their blessing, or to shield the disobedient from their curse. To believe this is the first step to a true penitence. Until a man sees this in all its grand and awful reality, his penitence is but the fright of his ignorance at the shadow of itself.

2. I have perverted that which is right.

This is the second article of the penitent's confession of faith, and full of dark meaning, as those who have passed through the agony know full well. "*I have perverted.*" The anguish of that "*I*" on a penitent's lip! No man knows what "*I*" means, but the man who has felt himself isolated from God by transgression, alone responsible for it, alone bound to bear it, a solitary soul in a universe of solitude; for of all the thronging myriads of beings who fill it, there is not one who can lift, or even share, the burden of his sin. It is the transgressor who knows what the burden of existence is, laden

with a weight which he must bear though it crush him, the burden of which he cannot cast on God. We cannot wonder that in all ages the intellect of man has made even desperate attempts to escape from this dread solution, and to connect with God in some way the burden of his sin. "*I have perverted the right.*" What means this "I?" Did not God make it, and is not God responsible for it? If the right is of God's making, who in the universe can mar? Philosophy has pressed these questions in more or less subtle forms on the intellect of each generation, but ultimately it is all summed up in the question in which St. Paul concentrates it, "*Who hath resisted His will?*" "I am what God has made me. I can but do what God has made me to do. There is, there can be, no such thing as freedom. God is absolute and omnipotent in the universe; there is, there can be, but one will in the universe, or God ceases to be God." This is the barest form of the Pantheistic argument against moral responsibility, and consequent excuse for sin. According to this philosophy, there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as sin. Man sins like a sullen dog, or a vicious horse. It is a fact about him, a very note-

worthy and unpleasant fact to others it may be, but that is all. He is a creature of infinitely higher endowment than dog or horse, and touched to infinitely finer issues, but still he is no more than the finest stop in that great organ, the creation, which gives forth its music under the breath and the hand of God. The penitent sweeps all this to the winds. It may be very difficult to square the conception of moral freedom with any definitions of God in the abstract which satisfy the intellect, but the penitent is not stopped by the difficulty. Arguments as to what God can do or cannot do, as to whether freedom is a possible or an impossible conception in any intelligent scheme of the universe, are to him but as filmy gossamer before a strong man's tread. When the soul first sees the Divine lawgiver, and asks itself the momentous questions on which hang its eternity, the "I" is the dread reality. One thing is clear to him as the sun at noon, that there is that within him which, whatever it may be, distinctly is not God. This "I" is the reality which millions of hopeless Buddhists at this moment supremely dread. "O God! could I but get away from myself; might I but lose it, lay it

down, let it be absorbed in thee!" But God is not the sinner, and the sinner knows it. Sin isolates him, sets him apart; and God teaches him, through sin, what is meant by "himself." He finds that he is a being having within himself the springs of his eternal woe or weal, bound to live on while God lives, with a burden which he must bear, though it crushes, torments, and curses him; to get rid of which he will fling himself under the bloody wheels of Juggernaut, or into the sacred stream, but which he finds again, in the first moment of consciousness beyond the river, heavier, more crushing than ever, and which he must lift and bear eternally.

Do you know what it is to hate yourself, and yet to feel that you can never get rid of yourself? You might tear yourself bit by bit till every fibre and thread of your wondrous texture is unravelled; not a particle as big as a grain of dust may survive of what seemed to be you; and yet you, the "I" in you, survives it, and smiles scornfully on the wreck. The penitent, at any rate, knows that there is something within him which is not God, which is capable of resisting God, of perverting that which is right in the sight of God, of becoming an object of repulsion

to God, the word of whose nature as well as of whose lips is, inevitably, "*Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" That power is in me, and I have used it. I have perverted that which was right. I have seen the right, and chosen the wrong, and I knew that I, and not God, was making the choice, and that I was choosing in spite of God. In the clear daylight of truth I have followed vanity and lies, and they have led me down into darkness and the valley of the shadow of death. I have corrupted the spring of my spirit's innocence and purity; I have established a propensity which drags me down ever lower and lower towards the pit. The light is there, but behind me. I am leaving it; daily it grows dimmer, and the darkness is gathering round me. God! "thou art justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." Thou hast witnessed, thou hast striven. I have resisted; I have perverted that which was right, is right, and will be right for ever. My blood is on my own head. My sin lieth at my door. I must answer it before the Judge.

3. *And it profited me not.*

It is the third and final article of a penitent's creed about sin. "*What profit have ye had in those*

things whereof ye are now ashamed, for the end of those things is death? "THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."

Many a reckless sinner goes on madly in his career of transgression till ruin stares him in the face, till a sight of the deadly dart, wielded by a ghastly hand, brings him to a pause. Perhaps he feels its cold point grazing against the shuddering flesh, and shrinks back appalled. "IT PROFITED ME NOT." If any other confession than this were possible for a sinner in the long run, and after full experience of an evil way, it would simply mean that the righteous God had ceased to be the ruler of the world. Can sin stand the test of possession? Is it proof against satiety? Given its end, can it rest in it and be blessed? If it can, then the Atheist is right: there is no God. For this test of profit is the ultimate test to which everything will be practically brought. If a man can solemnly feel that he is more blessed in serving the devil than in obeying God; that every power of his being finds its freest and most joyous development, and every latent faculty its truest education, in that work: that every pulse of pleasure is exhilarated, and every throb of pain soothed and stilled thereby; that his peace is perfect and his

Heaven serene; that he glories in the service, and asks no better than to live by it, and to die by it—I say, if this could be the solemn testimony of a man's spirit in a life of sin, it would be hard, by any abstract demonstrations about righteousness to get him to change it for what you might think a higher and a nobler way. He saith, "The old is better." It fills him with blessedness; it inspires him with hope; why should he change? But while God lives, this blessedness is absolutely impossible to sin. God witnesses by word against the essential nature of evil; His law denounces it as hateful in His sight. And He witnesses against it by its fruits. These, at any rate, shall bear testimony for the Ruler; these, at any rate, shall obey His will. Here we touch the limit of the free-will of man. In self-determination he is omnipotent; he is powerless as to results. What a man wills, too, he may do. God places no obstacle to his doing anything which he may please, which is within the wondrous compass of his powers. There is nothing whatever to hinder his resolving to strike a knife into the heart of the next man that he may meet; and but little to hinder his doing it. But there his power ends—God's

power begins. Laws are at work, in whose grasp he is powerless, which drag him to prison, and hang him at length as a dog for his crime. There is nothing to hinder your resolving to go out and spend the night in a foul debauch, and but little to hinder your doing it. The means, alas! are at hand all round you—you can go. But, then, nothing can help your going forth on the morrow with a pallid face, a sodden eye, a shaking hand; sick and heart-sick; unstrung, unmanned; feeling and looking like a beast. You can go this moment if you will; that is your power. You must suffer shame and wretchedness for it; that is God's. You can, if you like, be a bear in your home. You can make your wife tremble at the sight of you, and your children cower or shrink into dark corners from the kick or the curse, which is the only greeting that they know. But no power of yours can help your home being a bear-garden; your wife sullen, dirty, reckless; your children deceitful, vicious, indolent; and your soul a very hot-bed for forcing into early fruitage vice, misery, and despair. You can do the one, God does the other; and He asks you to balance the account. Settle it fairly you

shall. You do your will as to actions, He will have His will done as to results. And He asks you to look at the balance. Does it tempt you to go on? I know that it is dead against you. You are bankrupt already. It must be so inevitably, unless your arm be stronger than God's. Here is the hold which God keeps on men. They may sear out the lines which He inscribes on the fleshy tablet of every heart as witnesses to Him and to His truth; they may harden their hearts and deafen their ears to every direct appeal from Heaven. He may thunder His commandments in vain. But so long as men can suffer He can reach them; so long as they can feel the thorns and the goads, He can make them understand the deadliness of sin. So long as there lurks one faintest desire for the happiness which man was made to seek and enjoy, there is something which God can lay hold upon; there is a hook in the nostril of the foulest passions, the fiercest lusts, by which there is a hope that He may tame them and make them submissive to His will.

Such is the theory. And now let us apply the practical test of it. What fruit have you had off

this tree of sin? You have known something of the great realities of life ; some of you have travelled far on the pilgrimage ; you have plucked fruit enough off this tree to know well what it is worth. I see grey hairs here, and furrowed brows. Experience, life's cares and sorrows, have chased those lines. Your witness would be worth something. Is it for God or for the devil? Lift up your hand now and tell us, Is sin the loved and honoured mistress of your lives? Is the remembrance of all that sin and self-will have done for you so sweet that you ask no better than to love their ways, and to follow them for ever? Do *you* glory in your service, and in its fruits? Do you set yourself forth as a witness of how blessed a thing it is to grasp, and hoard, and drink, and game, and hate, and lust. One testified of old thus, concerning the ways of God: "*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth*

shall prosper." "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright: He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." Are you ready to set yourself forth in opposition, as a witness of the goodness of the ways of sin? Look round you. Search the neighbourhood of your own home. Is it the drunkard, the roysterer, the lazy, idle, tattling, guzzling workman, whose home seems to you most cheerful, bright, and happy? Don't you think that you could go through any neighbourhood, and put a mark on the doors of the sober, steady, industrious, God-fearing men and women? Would you not know them in a moment by the peace, the order, the cleanness, the comfort that reign within? Why, homes are just like faces. Some have a cheery smile, some have a sullen frown. Some look just like a drunkard. He is there staggering home, with hot, flushed face, truculent eye, and lowering brow. You see that he is going home to kick and to curse, and to do worse things, of which drink is

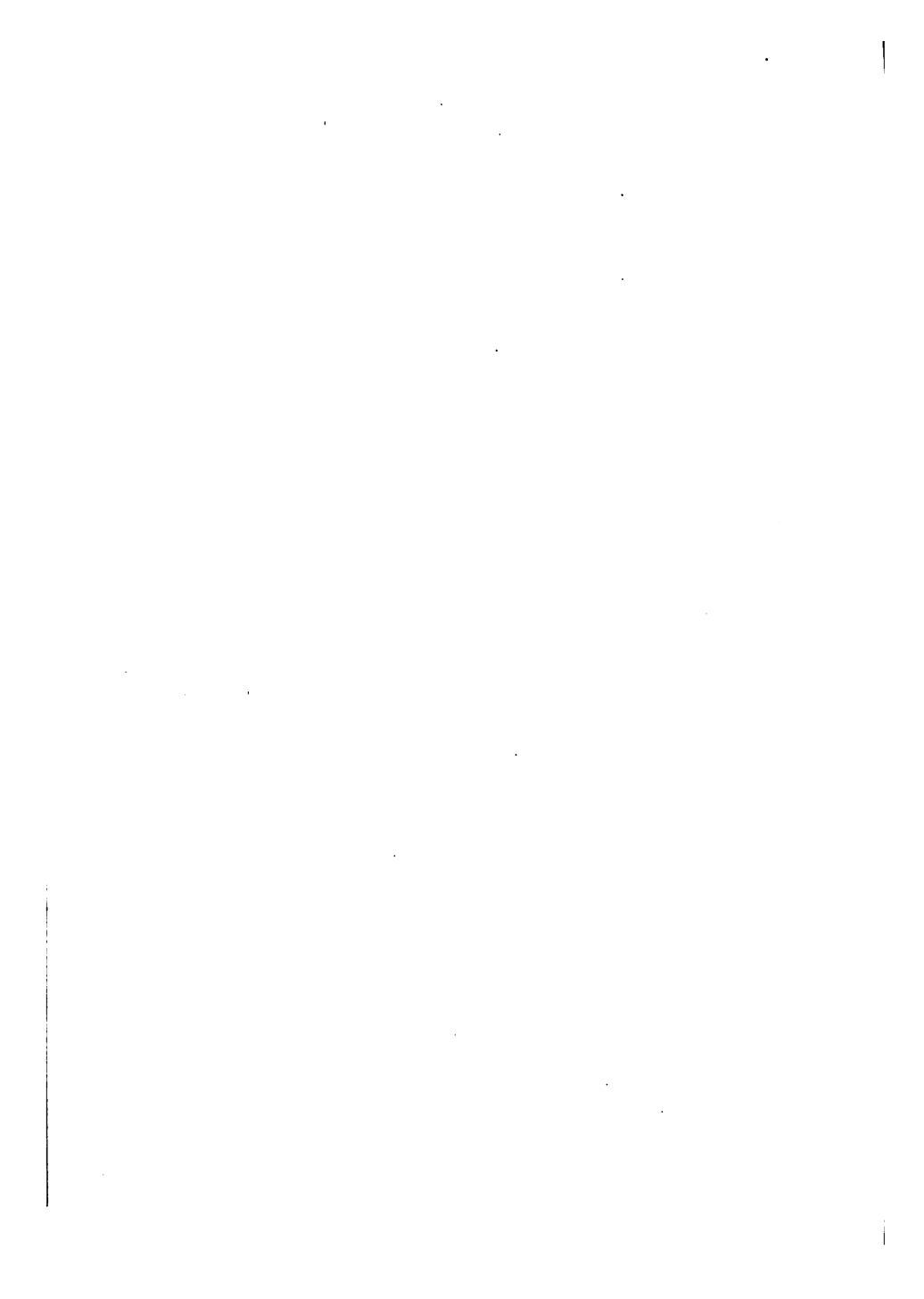
at the root. The man's home is like his face ; God makes the devil set his mark upon it, and the mark says to all men, " Beware." And there is the neat, tidy, comely, happy-looking housewife, who has just swept the hearth, given the children the last touch, and set the table for her hard-working husband's tea. Her house smiles and shines as well as her countenance. God sets His own mark there, and every one who looks upon it feels that there is something there which inspires confidence and hope. Can you deny that in the long run the devil's service sets its mark on men, a mark which all men instinctively shrink from ? The miser, the wanton, the drunkard, the idler, get a look which even the least observant note, and beware. I suppose, too, that even the most ardent votaries of pleasure will confess that its pursuit is its chief charm. The world's good cannot stand the test of possession. There is a burning thirst, an insatiate longing, with which it fills the soul ; it cries ever, " Give, give, give." Nothing can stay the cry, nothing can stifle it, and least of all success. One world conquered, it moans restlessly for another. The larger the conquest, the larger the pain. No man can rest in acquisitions. To

acquire is his instinct, and, as he heaps to himself worldly treasures and pleasures, and is insatiate still—still longing, still pining—the thought will steal on him, “I have made a grand mistake, *the* grand mistake. I have all I aimed at; I have spent my life in the acquisition, and it profiteth me nothing—a great heartache is all that I have gained. I have aroused a thirst which a universe of possession cannot satisfy. My doom is the doom of Tantalus. The waters are round me, but when I stoop to drink, they vanish; the dry, hot sand occupies their room. The boughs loaded with rich fruit are above me; but when I lift my hand in the agony of my hunger, they sweep up beyond my reach. Is there any good? Is there anything which profiteth anywhere? Is there anything in the wide universe which a man can possess and be at rest?” The answer to the question is—the Gospel. Man has an infinite in him, something which he caught from the inspiring breath of God. Nothing with limits can satisfy him finally; in God only can he find his end and be at rest. “*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy*

wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto Him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

I have sketched the creed of the penitent. The confession of the penitent, and the answer of God, which is the penitent's Gospel, I shall handle in the next discourse.

"If any say, I have sinned, I have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."



VI.

The Penitent's Gospel.



"He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, I have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light."—JOB XXXIII. 27, 28.

THE first verse contains the penitent's creed; the second, the substance of the Gospel. "*I have sinned, I have perverted that which was right, and it profited me not.*" It is the whole confession of human sin, its reality, its essence, its fruits. This book touches the depths—the depth of man, the depth of God. Its writer had the longest plummet-line which the men of old time were able to drop into the abyss of the Divine counsels. He gauged the mystery, though he could not solve it: the key

was not with him, though he could instruct us where to look for it—in the daysman who should explain and justify, as the God-Man alone could explain and justify, the dark and far-reaching methods of the Fatherly discipline of God. I regard the cry for a mediator, with which the Book of Job seems to me to be charged, as one of the chief of those “spiritual things” in the Old Testament Scripture, which, be the difficulties of these records what they may, make the Old Testament one book with the New. We do not find it simply in an isolated passage in this ancient drama of sorrow; it runs through the whole of it, and is in some sort its key. Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar—the sages charged with the hoary wisdom of the past—the young and brilliant Elihu, full even to distention with the new wine of genius, and freighted with the eloquent wisdom of the present, offer themselves successively as God’s expositors. But the sufferer will not hear them. His cry is “for God, for the living God,” and this is the real essence of the book. On this, as the spinal column, the whole form depends; for books may be vertebrate as well as men. The cry grows more earnest as the pitiless mongers

of orthodox platitudes are successively silenced, and it is answered at length by the appearing of the Lord himself. He came with lightning and tempest, and out of the whirlwind the awful challenge broke. But still He came. The cry was heard, the daysman appeared; the passionate appeal of this agonized spirit was not stifled, but answered; and a prophecy of the Incarnation was given to the world.

Sin, confession, and forgiveness or rather restoration, are the themes of these verses; and they are treated with a brevity and simplicity, but at the same time with a profound truth and completeness, which is characteristic of all the spiritual utterance of the book. "*If any say, I have sinned.*" That implies fundamentally that evil is not of God. The penitent has broken through all the webs of sophistry which the cunning intellect spins to hide from the fallen spirit the reality of its guilt and its doom. The dreary philosophy which includes sin as a part of God's arrangement of the universe, merely the necessary relief and foil of goodness, the night as the back-ground of the day—destroying man's responsibility, and making God unright-

eous who taketh vengeance—to him is a mere wilderness of words. He knows that there is a right and a wrong, wide as the poles asunder. “There was no confusion,” he says, “in my mind about them, there was that within me which testified what was of God and what was of the devil; I saw the right, I knew that it was right; a spirit within me said, ‘Choose the right and it shall be well with thee,’ and *I* chose the wrong. Again, again, again, in spite of the light of God, in spite of the spirit of God, in spite of my own convictions, and in the face of my knowledge of the end, I have said to evil, ‘be thou my God,’ to sin, ‘be thou my delight,’ to the world, ‘be thou my bride.’ *I have perverted that which was right.* I, in the full exercise of the freedom of my manhood, have done it, and *I* must bear the burden and meet the doom. I dare not say that God tempted me to evil, I dare not say that the devil forced me. *I* have done it. I have made evil a part of my being, I have taken its virus into the springs of my action, I have brought its taint into the currents of my blood, and *I* have to bear it, if there be no deliverance, while my being endures. Schoolmen,

cease your wearisome chatter about freedom and necessity, about the sense of sin being the mere hypochondria of the soul; I have it here within me, and I know too well its realness. Every statement which God makes finds emphatic echo within my being. I have a serpent within me, I have a weight upon me, which I—for of all beings in God's universe, my sin belongs to me alone—must bear for ever, unless there be some power which can renew my life in its innermost springs."

"And this my sin has profited me not." It is inevitable that it should be so. Sin is a battle against the living Maker and Lord of the Universe; what profit can that struggle bring? *"He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength; who hath hardened himself against Him, and hath prospered? Which removeth the mountains and they know not: which overturneth them in His anger. Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble. Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars. Which alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea. Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south. Which doeth great things past finding*

out ; yea, and wonders without number. Lo, He goeth by me, and I see Him not : He passeth on also, but I perceive Him not. Behold He taketh away, who can hinder Him ? who will say unto Him, What doest thou ?”

If sin in the long run can profit a soul—if it can fill it with peace and joy, and inspire it with courage and hope—if it can make the soul honour its service and covet its wage—then the righteous Lord hath ceased to rule the universe, the dark power has conquered, the reign of night and chaos is restored. “But I cannot,” cries the penitent, “make this confession. I know not the sinner who can make it. My confession is, that *‘it profited me not.’* I look back upon the past with shame and horror, and I am drinking the dregs of the cup of its pleasure in bitterness of soul. It is all unmingled shame and misery ; I have learnt now, what God told me at the first, *‘The wages of sin is death.’* *‘In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.’* And I am dead, if there be no quickening of spirits ; I am lost, if there be no redemption of the slave. *‘Is there no balm in Gilead ? is there no physician there ?’* *‘Can the leopard change his spots, and the Ethiopian his skin ?* Is the disease

remediless, is the captivity hopeless, is the death eternal ?”

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live : turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?” “He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not ; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.”

Having set forth the penitent's creed, I now come to speak of

II. The penitent's confession.

“If any man say, I have sinned.” This implies, at any rate, that if any man should think it and not say it, he must miss the promised fruit.

Let us look a little more closely at the subject of confession—the saying to God, “*I have sinned.*”

The Bible represents this as essential to complete forgiveness; on what ground of reason does this necessity rest? If a man is convinced, is not that sufficient? If he knows in his own soul that he has been a fool or a beast, and says it to himself, with that emphasis with which a man can talk to himself of himself on fit occasions, is not that enough? No! it is not enough; for reasons some of which at any rate I will try to set forth. I am the more anxious to do this because I think that the duty of confession is often grounded on a very false or very insufficient basis. And first, as to the need of confession generally. Something like this is often urged in depreciation of it. "The mere act of confession cannot be material; if the reality is in the heart, God sees it, and reality is all He cares for; He wants to see sorrow and shame for sin, and if that be there, what to Him are words?" Precisely what they are to your fatherly heart, when you are seeking to soften and reclaim a wayward, sinful child. Search into the reason why you demand confession, before you condemn the demand of God. You may feel perfectly well assured that a child has found out the misery of sin,

that in his own heart he condemns the transgression, and would give anything to recall it—that he is quite despondent and wretched through the discord which his sin has generated between himself and those whom he loves, but until he has said it, you feel that peace can only be half restored; you may be very deeply thankful to see the traces of penitence in his spirit, to be sure that he has condemned the sin in his heart; and yet, if he still refuses to confess it, to say, “*Father, I have sinned,*” you feel that the penitence is essentially imperfect, that there is still a cloud between your spirit and his spirit, and the breach in the home is still unhealed. What is the ground of this? The right answer may help us to understand why confession is exacted by God. Is the ground of your demand the fact that your honour has been insulted, and needs to be vindicated by a formal reparation; that your dignity has been lowered, and needs, like a national flag, to be publicly saluted before it consents to be appeased? I venture to hope that there would be something greater in your heart than the sentiment of honour, which is honourable only when it is the outwork of deeper things; and that the

breach in such a case would not seem to you one which brought up the question of formal apologies and reparations. Does not the father's demand for confession spring rather out of the conviction that the penitence is imperfect which does not feel itself moved to confession spontaneously? If a child is miserable because of some transgression against the parent, and yet hides that misery from the parent's eye, and holds back that confession which would be a balm to the parent's heart, it means distinctly that there is still an alienation, that the child's heart is not perfect towards the parent, and that there is a selfish isolation of himself from the heart of the parent and the communion of the home, which in itself is a sin against the father's love. The child in that case does not yet see the true sin, the failure of filial duty; he has not yet sorrowed over the deepest cause of sorrow, the wounding a parent's heart. It is a sign that he does not yet long, or will not let the longing have way, for the true reconciliation, the true peace—the laying his aching head and burying his tear-stained cheek on the parent's bosom, and drinking in at every pore the assurance of restored confidence

and love. I venture to think that this, and not the mere sentiment of dignity and honour, is the reason why a parent waits for confession, and must hear the "Father, I have sinned," and clasp the penitent child to his heart, before he can feel that peace has been perfectly restored.

Let your own hearts interpret for you the ways of God.

He demands confession:—"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. Why? Some answer, that sin is a dishonour, a public dishonour to His government; confession is the only public reparation which can be offered for the fault; that He is a Ruler having public interests in charge, and, for the sake of those public interests, is bound to demand that the sinner shall make public confession, and thus do formal homage to the government whose laws he has formally spurned. If God is to be conceived of, in His relation to

men, fundamentally as a Ruler, if that is the truest account which is to be given of the matter, there is no objection to be made to the statement. The Ruler, for the sake of the whole realm, righteously compels the rebellious subject to recant and swear allegiance, before he can be forgiven. But I do not read in the records of the life of Christ, especially in that Gospel which gives the fullest record of His interior life, and His own sense of His mission, that He came to reveal the Ruler. I read in almost every page that He came to reveal the Father unto men. It is said by some who have criticised my statements on this point, that it is quite true that God is the Father, and there has, perhaps, been an undue suppression of the Fatherly element in His nature and relations in our accepted theology; but then He is also a Ruler, and sustains relations which attach purely to the Ruler, to man, and to mankind. I confess that I cannot understand this variety in God. God is one. If He is a Father and also a Ruler, one must be the root of the other, He cannot be in part both. His rule must run through His fatherhood, and His fatherhood through His rule; and which is the root element of the twain no intelli-

gent student of the Gospels can be left to doubt. A Ruler He is, unquestionably, with all a ruler's rights and claims. What father is he who does not rule in his home? But He is a Fatherly Ruler, because essentially a Father; all whose acts have their full explanation only in the relation between a father's spirit and a child. A father's rule can miss none of the ends which pure rule can righteously contemplate, but it wins them in winning what is yet more precious, the ends which a father may seek in the education of a child.

It appears to me that God's reason for demanding confession may be stated on this two-fold ground:—

1. Confession alone makes the penitence complete.
2. Confession alone re-establishes that filial relation, without which the penitence can have no lasting fruits.

1. Confession completes the penitence. It is in truth the first instinct of a truly filial heart. No sense of shame has reached its utmost depth, until wronging a father, wounding his heart, grieving his love, is felt to be the blackest feature of it. Laws are but abstractions until we realise that they are uttered by a lawgiver; and until we feel that

we have sinned against a Being, we talk about violated laws in vain. A true penitence for sin against a Being, inevitably leads us to that Being; His forgiveness, the restoration of His confidence and love, are the essential conditions of our peace. The real root-sin of our nature is the loss of the filial love and trust in God. While the soul stands far off from Him, bitterly conscious of sin, but resolved, "I will repent, but I will not confess," the very core of the sin is there. All that is repented of fails to touch the real root of the transgression. The poison is in the wound still, and will frustrate all the cure. The rancour of the soul, which is the real venom of the wound, God seeks to expurge; and that never passes out until the penitent, hungry, footsore, tear-stained, travel-worn, falls blessedly on his Father's bosom, and cries, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son;*" and then, and then only, can the joyous cry be heard, "*Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry; For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.*"

2. Confession re-establishes the filial relation, which alone can give to penitence its perfect fruit.

The father not only wishes to know that his child has come to his right mind, and that he sees both the commandment and his own transgression in the clear daylight of truth, but he wishes to have him home again, near his side, under his eye and hand, that he may watch and tend him, train and teach him, uphold him against the temptations which once mastered him, and make his repentance a repentance unto life. A sense of right in common is not a sufficient bond of communion between two beings who are brought into relations, unless it be cemented by warm and living bands of love. Spirits do not need only to see eye to eye, they need to beat heart to heart; till that is possible, their concord is not perfect, they may talk of peace, but there is nothing of that peace which is known as the peace of God. That is essentially personal. It is not the setting a soul square with righteousness; this it includes, but it is essentially the setting a heart right with God. Hence confession, which is the restoration of a personal union, is essential to it. Let that be withheld, the father's heart is unsatisfied, the child's

heart is unsoothed, the home is closed, the songs are still. Th restoration of the child to the father's heart is the only complete restoration ; this alone is the guarantee of future peace. Let the barrier which the sullen heart persists in holding against the Lord once be broken, let the inward shame and sorrow burst forth in the confession—" *Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness : according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight : that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest,*"—and the peace becomes perfect and blessed. Thus the demand for confession, like all Divine commands, has its root in the deep love of the Father of Spirits for even His prodigal children, and His resolve that their restoration shall be a complete restoration to peace and to Himself. This leads me to speak, in the third place, of

III. The fruits of confession through the abounding mercy and love of God.

" *He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and*

his life shall see the light." "God will deliver;" and the way of deliverance is here not dimly set forth. (Read Job xxxiii. 14—26.) I am not about to discuss the intricate questions which concern the doctrinal bearings of particular passages of the Book of Job. To my mind, not in one passage only, but in many of the most profound passages of the book, the great idea of mediation is very plainly unfolded; and, as I have before said, the conditions of effectual mediation are very explicitly set forth. But, in truth, every promise of God in the Old Testament is built on the facts which are developed in the New. From first to last it is God in Christ, "reconciling the world unto Himself, having made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." It is God in Christ who treats with man every when and everywhere. It is on the basis of the atonement which was completed on Calvary, that God meets with man and pleads with him in the promise:—"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." The atonement is the reason, the promise is its fruit. Strike

out that history—the history of the passion of the Incarnate Word—and there is no meeting-point of man and God. There is then no reason in forgiveness, no right. God could not pronounce it; man could not believe in it; Heaven could not rejoice over it:—“*But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*” There is the one absolute basis on which justification rests. But in this passage, and throughout the Old Testament generally, there is less effort to explain the grounds of the Divine action, than to declare the end, as concerns man—forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.

The fruits here set forth are two-fold. He will

deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

1. The pit. It is a word at which some laugh, but at which others, who know what sin means, shudder. Some treat it as a mere bugbear, with which theologians frighten the foolish; to others, it is the horror of horrors, the grave of a living soul. The pit! Have you ever looked boldly into your own soul when the devil has been holding high festival there; after a mad revel, a foul wrong, a dark crime, or those more subtle and deadly sins of the spirit—a frenzy of hate, envy, or revenge? Is there anything blacker in the universe than that looks? There is a pit there deep enough, dark enough, to bury a soul's volition, a soul's love, a soul's joy, a soul's hope, for ever from the light of day. Have you ever shuddered at the thought of sinking into the pit of your own sin, the slime of your own impurity; and stifling there for ever? Has the vision of remaining as you are at your worst, ever appalled you; your worst passions, your worst vices, rampant, raging, with no hope of taming them, no hope of even a gleam of a brighter world, a better life, for ever and ever? If that vision has ever crossed you,

I need not talk to you about the horrors of the pit. Some of you may never have known it. But have you never looked into a face which but masked a pit of foulness and wretchedness ; the presentment of a spirit whose every diviner power and passion had been wrested to the uses, prostituted to the pleasures of sin ; a soul whose love was all dead, whose light was all dark, whose joy was all quenched in the languor of satiety, whose hope was all buried in the murky midnight of despair ; a man who has lived his life of crime or pleasure at a desperate pace, and who has come quickly to the goal of mental, moral, and spiritual death ; in the early morning of an eternal existence, a bankrupt ; stripped, beggared, *blasé* ; whining for death, for there is nothing to live for ; whining at death, for there is nothing to die for. Horror of horrors ! What is that awful shuddering gloom into which the soul is plunged when the thread of a wasted life is severed, and it drops out of the homes of the living into—the pit ?

I have seen such faces, and need none to explain to me these words. Picture Judas in the moment when the agony of life had become intolerable. Picture to yourselves his face as he stands there,

the cord tightening about his neck, quivering on the edge of eternity, dropping down into his own place—the pit. “Hear, ye despisers, and tremble,” “lest ye also come into that place of torment.” But God can deliver:—“*He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.*” The confession of penitence in the uttermost extremity of guilt and sorrow, if any of you have reached it, shows that the pulses of the child’s heart are not yet dead within. The Father, taking His penitent to His bosom, even in that extremity, can quicken, renew, and save. A new heart He can give, a new life—the soul made anew after the image of the Saviour, to be born at length, through all the anguish and travail of the present discipline into the sunlight of the eternal world. For—

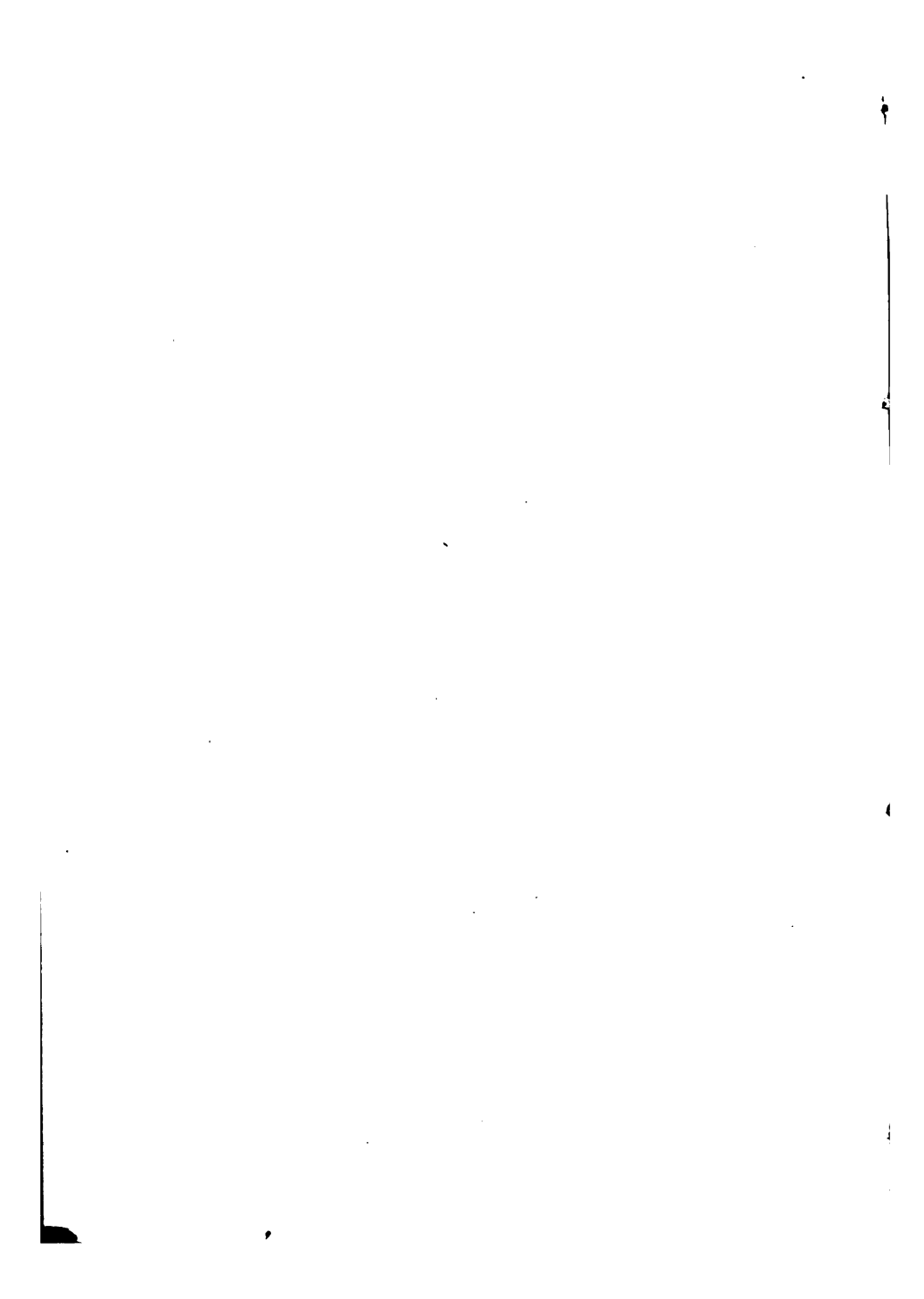
2. “*His life shall see the light.*” The light in which it was born to live, the light of the face of God. Light—the light of God—is to life what sun-warmth is to flowers. It draws forth their beauty and fragrance; it clothes them with their dress of glory. No fairer image is there of the estate of a

soul new born with a life which is one with Christ's ; one with all that is living, beautiful, blessed, victorious, radiant, in the universe ; conscious now that it has in itself, through Christ, not a pit of horrible darkness, but a fountain of living, exhaustless force—a power to be, a power to be good, a power to be blessed, for ever and ever. From the very verge of the pit of darkness, where itself and all its hope were wellnigh buried, it springs as to Heaven's gate, and sings pæans with the angels, "*Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever.*" It is the everlasting song. The soul caught the first note when the word, "*Father, I have sinned,*" was faltering on its stammering tongue. Its life is thenceforth a battle-march ; a hymn of victory, whose theme is the redeeming love and power of the Lamb. The world of light is its home, of which nor death, nor hell, can rob it ; and there—and 'tis but a filmy veil between—" *they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and the days of their mourning are ended.*"

Who, then, will cast aside his rags, fling down his husks, and cry, "*Father I have sinned against*

Heaven and in thy sight, and I am no more worthy to be called thy son?" Who will burst now from the bondage of death and escape into the realm of the light for ever? Ho! ye that have lien among the pots, who have wallowed in the dust and filth of the sty of sin, come forth! come forth! into the sunlight of the love of God. Touched, kindled, by that golden glory, your life shall soar and shine, as a "dove whose wings are of silver and her feathers of yellow gold." Your life shall see the light. A glory shall gild its path, even through this weary wilderness of discipline. The light shall shine with more radiant splendour, as your pathway nears the bourne of immortality. With the step and the shout of the victor you shall pass the portal, and all the glory of the heavenly day shall burst upon your sight.

"The world recedes : it disappears :
Heaven opens on my eyes, my ears
With sounds seraphic ring !
Lend, lend your wings ; I mount, I fly ;
O grave, where is thy victory ?
O death, where is thy sting ?"



VII.

She loved much : She had much forgiven.



"And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharise's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. . . . Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much. . . . And He said unto the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."—LUKE VII. 37, 38, 47, 50.

THIS banquet of the Pharisee occupied, *probably*, a later portion of the day on which our Lord had delivered one of His most remarkable discourses. His theme had been John the Baptist—a prophet hated of the Pharisees, but dear to the people. John had been emphatically, like all his

predecessors, the prophet of the people. The poor hear ever gladly such truth as rolled in thunder from his lips. They were worn down by legal exactions, and sick of Pharisaic cant and lies. They thronged to the ministry of a man who dealt a common judgment and a common measure of truth to all. The intense and fearless energy of this preacher of righteousness stirred their deeper passions; while his fierce denunciation of their taskmasters and tyrants kindled a hope of relief from their burdens. It made life more tolerable. Some ray of joy shone in their sad hearts at the thought that the kingdom of God was so near.

John came as a Reformer. All great Reformers are greeted at first with the popular sympathy and support. Doctrines of righteousness cannot but strike powerfully on the side of the oppressed and down-trodden classes, who feel themselves depressed below their natural level by the unrighteousness of their lords. There is always too much that palpably needs reform in this sad world, for reform to be other than a popular cry with those whose lot exposes them, unarmed, to the assault of "outrageous fortune." Any man who will stand up and preach

righteousness in God's name, and with Divine boldness, shall have throngs of the poor of this world round him, applauding to the echo, until they find that the reformation which he preaches must have its beginning in their own hearts. Then the love of many waxes cold. But John bore the convictions and the sympathies of the multitude with him through his brief but impetuous career. The hate and antagonism of the Pharisees, whom they hated, his ascetic life, his intense zeal, his fearless utterance, his early doom, kindled their imaginations, and touched their hearts. So jealously did the people cherish his memory, that the rulers might more safely have wrought any moral abomination in Jerusalem than have whispered a doubt of his prophetic ministry. "The rulers feared the people, because that all men held John to be a prophet."

The Lord had spoken of this great forerunner, his vigorous independence, his prophetic grandeur, before which even the ministry of Elijah paled; and then He enlarged His discourse, He spake of that kingdom of Heaven of which John had been the herald, its winning aspect, its inclusive spirit, its genial breadth of sympathy and love, the daring

eagerness with which all men pressed into it, and the contrast which at every point it presented to the rigid and strait-laced exclusions of the law. And as He spake "*all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.*" Supplying from Matthew xi. Luke's omissions, we find that this sketch of the essential character of the kingdom of Heaven, led on to some awful denunciations of those by whom its benign ministry was scorned. (Matt. xi. 21—23.) Lifting His thoughts from thence, He uttered some calm deep words about the Father—whom then, for the first time in His public ministry, He thus addressed—the mystery of His nature, unfathomable by human wisdom, the inscrutable secrets of His government, the dread abyss of God, which He, the only begotten Son, alone fathomed and filled. He reminded them of the tremendous sanctions with which His words were attended, how even the lightest had on it the absolute emphasis of God. Then, lest words so awful, thoughts so profound, should chill and oppress their spirits, His heart poured forth, from a

depth of tenderness unfathomed still, that most tender, pathetic, and soul-piercing appeal of the Man of Sorrows to the children of sorrows, which perhaps is without peer even among "the words of the Lord Jesus:"—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." I have directed your thoughts to this discourse in its wholeness, because these last words seem to furnish the key to the most touching and pregnant narrative which succeeds:—"And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden Him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him,

Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors : the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most ? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And He said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And He turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman ? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet : but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss : but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint : but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also ? And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee ; go in peace." I beg my readers to study this carefully. It is evident that our

Lord's discourse had been listened to by multitudes. Among them, a woman that was a sinner had heard His words about the Father and the kingdom of Heaven; she was apparently heart-sick of her vocation, perhaps, heart-sick of her very life. Righteousness was a thing she dared not think of. Had she been bred in a righteous home? Did wandering memories throng thickly when these things of man's higher life rose up before her sight? Perhaps the denunciation of God's vengeance on the despisers of the Saviour had shaken her soul from its guilty slumbers. The prayer of Jesus to the Father, this communion of a brother man with the Lord of all, had opened the vision of Heaven above her. Ah! might she but look up and see a Father smiling, where she dreaded to find only a flaming sword. Then the tender pathetic appeal, into which the Saviour's communion with the Father glided, completed the conquest of her nature. Hope flashed its light into her spirit. Life had now some worth to her. It was worth while even to battle with this tyrannous evil, for there was born within her a hope that it might be forgiven and conquered. When the crowd

broke up, she marked that Simon had bidden the Saviour to the banquet. These ostentatious entertainments admitted the poor to behold their splendour, and to gather the crumbs from the loaded board. After a while, clasping something hidden in her bosom, she glided in among the guests; kneeling in the shadow of His couch, and grasping the precious casket, on which, perhaps, she had spent all her living, and which, with love's sure instinct, she had provided against this need, she looked eagerly on the scene. We can imagine how she would drink in the music of the voice of the Saviour, and feel that the breath of His presence stirred the torpid faculties of her spirit, and quickened the numbed affections of her heart. Silently she watched what *men* would do to this matchless teacher, how they would distinguish with their honours Him whose tones had poured new life into the poor sinner's bruised and bleeding heart. Scorn and indignation struggled in a bosom already bursting with emotion, when she saw that they wilfully dishonoured Him. Rising at length with the dignity of reverence and the beauty of love, her pent-up passion burst forth in a flood of uncontrollable

weeping. Then she broke the box which she had borne in her bosom, and shed on Him its odour like incense. Bathing His feet with her tears, and wiping them with her silken hair, she shewed, to the confusion of the mocking guests, and the eternal shame of their host, how the outcasts of earth can greet the Lord, who left His throne and the bliss of the Father's bosom to save them, to wipe the tears of broken-hearted mourners, lighten the darkness of hope-abandoned prodigals, and break the yoke, though He himself should die in the effort, by which Satan's captives were being led down into the deepest depths of hell.

In treating this subject more fully I shall try to analyse

I. The secret springs of the poor sinner's conduct.

II. The nature of the action, which was viewed so diversely by the Pharisees and the Lord.

I. The springs of the woman's conduct.

The woman was "a sinner." Into the precise form or extent of her transgression there is no need to pry. The word was very significant; a "lost woman" would be its equivalent now. The sin was

one which filled her whole consciousness. There was no chance of her forgetting it, poor outcast! known, shunned, hated, by man, and as the priests and doctors of her day told her, by the angels, and by God.

The springs of her action, perhaps, lie here.

1. In her desperate self-abandonment the Lord had lit one ray of hope within her spirit. "*Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" What sin-crushed spirit would not leap to hear such words from such Divine lips? Despair is the devil's own instrument. The first step in the reformation of the most abandoned profligates is to get them to care for themselves—to think themselves worth the care. How many men are there who, heart-sick of sin, loathing it in their better moments with an intensity which no Pharisee can measure, yet practice it recklessly day by day. Why? Because they see nothing beyond; and find nothing in themselves worth saving for a higher destiny. Black clouds close their future; or if they lift they grow lurid. "What, then, is the use of struggling?" they cry; "Fate is against us, to sin is our destiny, and the punishment of sin

is our doom. If we break the chain—what then? What is there for us to do, to be, or to become, beyond?" And so the habit, though hated, tyrannizes. There is no strength in the springs of action, because no hope. They feel themselves contemptible and loathly; and they make up their minds, seeing no better within their reach, to drag about with them the dead carcase of their sin—many with a half-conscious notion that what they suffer may help to atone. He speaks the word of life to them who first makes them feel that they have a future, that there is a soul within them still which God cares for, searches after, and at any cost of suffering would save. And when this thought first flashes its ray of hope into the spirit, the loathings and the longings which the poor sinner had long been crushing, start up with a new and terrible vitality. "Men, you have wronged me, poor outcast that I am, trampling me on your dunghills among your rubbish and offal, as a thing too far gone, too tainted to the core, to live again a human life. I know now that I am a spirit still. God tells me that there is that within me which is worth redemption. I arise at His call and go forth, though a baptism of

tears and blood be before me, to meet a spirit's destiny."

Doubtless, this poor sinner had long loathed her vocation. Doubtless, the burning blush of shame had often stained her cheek, and tears, tears that had a tinge of blood in them, had often dimmed her eye, when she remembered that she had lost her womanhood, lost her soul, lost her life, for ever. Surely, too, the thought of reformation had often visited her. But the "Where shall I go, what shall I do," as often checked her. "Who in this universe cares for a woman that is a sinner? Shall I ask the Pharisee to help me? He will but gather his garments closer lest I should touch him. My parents? They have shut the door of their homes and their hearts in my face. The God of my people is a God whose holiness burns like fire, and I belong to the darkness and the night. The darkness is my home, and misery is my portion. Everlasting contempt is the harvest of my future!" Oh! what a heaven-born ray of hope was lit within the darkness of her spirit; what a gleam flashed forth from that jewel, which, though dimmed and flawed, was within her still, when the Man who was fresh from

the shrine of immaculate purity, and was bathed in its holy lustre, bent on that woman who was a sinner a glance of ineffable tenderness, and said, "*Come unto me, thou weary and heavy laden one, and I will give thee rest.*" "*Woman, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.*"

2. The Lord hath quickened within her numbed and withered heart the pulses of a blessed and purifying love.

Love is the strong redeemer of pollution. How hard and how long will even a human love struggle against the pollution of a sensual life. Even from the depths of shame, love can lift the soul to the light again, and almost to Heaven. The devil has not fairly secured his victim, until the very embers of love are extinguished in the hearth-fire of the heart. In the lowest and basest class of society, that which preys on every other class, the foulest vices and the darkest crimes have just one feature which redeems them from being hellish, and that is the unselfish love, which sometimes burns with a strange purity, on the altar of the corruptest heart.

This woman was a sinner. Love was dead

within her. Frowned on by all, she had learnt only to hate. The blessedness of loving was a memory of the past. She had known it once, but a great gulf had opened between her and that happy time. She could recall it only as Eve remembered Eden: dimly, as through tears, and from afar. It was long since the pulses of pleasure had been quickened by anything more holy than the sullen heat of passion, or the dull fury of revenge. Jesus made her a woman again. The tendrils of love, torn from their pristine hold, all tangled and rotting on the damp earth whereon she grovelled, began to tingle and thrill again. As a mother joys to hear the first faint cry of her little one, she joyed to feel the first faint throbbing of the pulses of a pure and heavenly love. "*Come unto me,*" said a Being full of life and of wisdom, a Being of celestial goodness, holiness, and truth. She felt, lost as she was, that she could love that Man of Sorrows; she felt that the cords of love and the bands of a man, were drawing the poor outcast of earth to his heart. Heaven seemed to open above her and beam its benediction. Earth smiled around her, all things dressed themselves in new beauty, the very air was glad,

when the first glow of love breathed through her spirit. Her sin was still there. She needed none to remind her of it. Never had she felt so intensely as at that moment the blackness of her transgression. Never—else what mean those blinding tears?—had the anguish of contrition so preyed upon her heart. But love was there, celestial spirit, and some sure instinct told her that the celestial spirit must conquer in every strife. The Lord had brought her out of the depths, and set her upon a rock. A few brief words, and the vision of a human countenance, had made a complete revolution in her life; out of hell itself it had brought her up, and set her before the gate of Heaven. There, with all the white-robed throng, she is singing, “Unto Him who hath loved me, and washed me from my sins in His own blood, and hath made me a king and priest unto God and His Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

II. And now let us turn our thoughts to the nature of the action, and analyse the opposing judgments which were passed on it by the disciples and the Lord. Worldly wisdom would probably find a double objection to this transaction.

1. It was shameful that a woman, who was a sinner, should approach a prophet ; and

2. The gift was lavish and wasteful, and might have been put to a better use.

It is impossible not to compare with this another but a very kindred transaction, which is recorded by Saint John. (Read John xii. 1—8.) From these two passages we may fairly gather what may be urged by worldly wisdom against such a ministry of love. Instead of answering these objections in detail, it appears to me more helpful to set forth some of the principles which seem to be involved in the answers of the Lord. And Jésus seems to me to say by His answers,

1. That love—such love—must be left to its native affinities. Its elections are absolute, its decisions are supreme.

No doubt the woman who was a sinner and the rich Pharisee's house were in strange association. Sympathy between them there could be none. But if a sinner should be drawn by the spells of a heavenly love even to a rich Pharisee's presence, the Lord says that that presence would be less contaminated by the sinner, than it would be blessed

and honoured by the love. That a sinner should venture within the sphere of a prophet's sanctity was still more strange to Simon. All unknown to him the doctrine unfolded in these pregnant words. (Read Luke xv. 1—10.) Unknown to him that his guest had stooped from a glorious heavenly throne, and put off its crown, that sinners who had known Him only as the God of righteousness, and had trembled, might rejoice in Him as the God of mercy, and repay the sacrifice by love. Simon knew not that heavenly love, though born in that corrupted bosom, was a spirit more strong and celestial than the spirit of a Pharisee's righteousness. He knew as little that for love, yea, the love of the prodigal children, the Saviour's spirit had yearned even on His throne of glory. The love of a Father for prodigal children is a hard thought to a Pharisee's understanding, and a strange sensation to a Pharisee's heart. But the Lord knew that His sacrifice and suffering had not been fruitless, when love's strong instincts had guided a woman who was a sinner to weep out the stains of her pollution at His footstool, and draw new life by that potent talisman out of His sympathetic heart.

Simon saw there but the abandoned woman, with all the stains of her guilt upon her, whose very love would contaminate the purity of his home, and the reputation of his grace; the Lord Jesus saw the saint, whom His grace had bound with surer than adamantine bands to His heart for ever—saved by His word from eternal perdition, to shine as a star in the kingdom of His Father, and shed, not tears, but beams of love on His radiant home, radiant with joy like hers, through eternity.

2. The Lord said that there are gifts which a love like hers alone can justify.

“She loved much,” He pleaded, in answer to the glances which condemned the occasion as a scandal, and the gift as a waste. There are gifts which we measure, and are bound to measure, by the need of the recipient. Then let the strictest prudence gauge and limit, lest a puny nature become surfeited with a bounty which in such case may be wanton, and even a sin.

There are gifts which are simply the utterance of the heart of the giver, outlets of surcharged feeling, expressions of thoughts too deep for words, for tears. Let the cold and cautious stand aside while

such are passing, nor stay the flight of these angels on the wing. The heart's first duty is to find itself expression. She loved much ; she spent her living in telling how much she loved. Simon ! there is a malignant devil in that cautious calculation. That spirit would weigh the sunlight, and moan that so much should be lost on the waste places of the world. Nay, it would shut up, lest it should become bankrupt, the treasury of the love of God. She loved much, and she gave her all to show it. Perhaps it reminded the Saviour of another sacrifice, more lavish, more uncalculating still. A sacrifice wherein God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that the world through Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Wherein, too, the Son gave all that enriched His being, and made His bliss, for the love of unworthy, unthankful man. Simon ! measure the love of Christ by the same dull measures ; it will stand forth as the very type of prodigality and wanton waste.

Moreover, love like hers is not so uncalculating, though it disdains Pharisaic measures. The woman gave her living, but she won her soul. The ointment was lost, and the money which bought it, but her

soul was for ever rid of its burden, and was braced for conflict and heavenly work. Love, though profuse in gifts, clears the intellect, kindles the spirit, stirs the courage, and nerves the hands. Paul, when he had counted all things but loss for Christ, began in earnest his higher ministry to mankind. That woman, having wept out her contrition, and shed forth her love, stood prompt for duty—ready for nobler ministry to souls and bodies, than Simon with all his gold. She loved much. She showed it lavishly. Let it pass, Simon! Her gift cannot reach the measure of her Saviour's. The world, no doubt, has lost the ointment, but God and Heaven have gained a soul.

3. The Saviour says that love like hers may well seek strange and profuse expressions, for it is the parent of a glory and blessedness, which transcend all utterance and thought.

Love is life. The woman who was a sinner, loving much, grew more swiftly and strongly to saintly perfectness, than Simon the just Pharisee measuring and obeying. Love, like electric fire, leaps swiftly to its object. Justness, the quiet sense of duty, the careful measuring of obligations, travels

slowly, though wisely and surely, along the road. (Read Luke vii. 47—50.) Perhaps a cautious prudence, a hesitation to commit himself by too pointed courtesies to the Saviour, is the worst that we can lay to the Pharisee's charge. But that sinner's passionate love had already outstripped him far. He was grovelling among his cautious calculations, she was already soaring upwards to Heaven and to God. That glow of love in her heart was a nascent glory. That pulse of life which it had quickened within her could never be lost or killed. She went forth from the Saviour's presence already a saint in spirit; she is standing now before her Saviour's throne, a saint in glory and in bliss. It was of the kindred deed of a kindred spirit that the Saviour declared, "*Wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached in the whole world: there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her.*" Art has selected this act as the very type of tenderness and devotion, and the angels cherish its memory, and celebrate it in their songs in Heaven.

And now, "HOW MUCH OWEST THOU UNTO MY LORD?" "*She loved much: for she had much forgiven.*" Man! woman! how much lovest thou?

How much owest thou? Life, intellect, friends, love, the broad creation, the splendour of the universe, all are there, freely poured forth by His bounty at thy feet. And shall I not say unto thee how thou owest unto Him thine own soul also? Canst thou sum in full that debt? A burden of guilt lifted which else had crushed thee; a prison-house of Satan shattered which else had held thee a captive in eternal pain; a grisly terror conquered, destroyed, which else had made thy life a spectre-haunted night! And how much hast thou paid? Hast thou paid even a word? Hast thou even confessed His name? Has He ever heard a word of public homage and honour from thy lips? Is not the time come to have done with this trembling, calculating neutrality, and to fling yourself, like this poor sinner, with a flood of passionate tears at His feet.

“ Now I am thine, for ever thine,
Nor shall my purpose move;
Thy hand hath loosed my bonds of pain,
And bound me with thy love.
Here in thy courts I leave my vow,
And thy rich grace record;
Witness, ye saints, who hear me now,
If I forsake the Lord.”

And then go on to fathom the deeper meanings of this woman's sacrifice. Understand what he meant, who said, "*I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" Her tears meant all that—her life we may be sure expressed it. "*Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace,*" dismissed her to a life which was no feeble or partial sacrifice. The words would have been no mockery on her lips,

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small,
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."



VIII.

The Sin that hath never Forgiveness.



"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"—MATT. XXIII. 33.

I THINK that the most awful word which has ever been written by a human pen is "the wrath of the Lamb." The prelude to its out-pouring is here. Once only was that tender and merciful spirit stirred to vehement and scathing denunciation; and then it uttered the most terrible anathema which is on record in the Book of God. Of all wrath, the wrath of the Lamb must be the most awful, because the most hopeless. When He who would give the best blood of His heart to save, rises up to judgment, Divine patience and hope are fruitless; the glow

which would have quickened, had a pulse been left to quicken, then burns but to destroy. The wrath of the Lamb! Fear it not, trembler, fear it not; it burns not for thee. For any who have the heart to tremble at it, it is not. The unpardonable sin! Have no dread, you who shudder at the thought of it. It is not for any who can feel distress at sin. All sin hath forgiveness that knows itself to be sin, and trembles. No humbled fearful transgressor can ever wither under the wrath of Christ. It sounds like a paradox, but none who have the grace to fear need ever be fearful. Never until you begin to thank God that you are not as other men are, and to recite your catalogue of virtues as a pleasant lecture in the ear of Heaven, need you begin to question about "*the sin that never hath forgiveness, neither in this world, nor in the world which is to come.*"

There is something which always seems to me very terrible when I open this chapter. These words are doubly awful on the lips of the patient and forgiving Christ. He had lived among the throngs of sinners, the crippled, maimed, stained, and out-cast, and He had nothing but words of gracious compassion and tenderness to speak to them. "*Come*

unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," had been His cry. It had drawn the sinners of the *world* around Him, as though His pity had been magnetic, and many a poor prodigal and profligate had wept out their guilt and misery at His feet. But here were sinners—sinners of the Church—on whom He flashed the lightning of His indignation; whose portrait He draws with pitiless severity; whose sin He withers with a blighting anathema, the more startling because the publicans and harlots had been wondering throughout His ministry at the gracious words which ever fell from His lips. Like the tears of a strong proud man, like the calm of a high-spirited and passionate woman, like the complaint of a gentle and long-suffering heart, like the daring energy of meekness when dear ones are threatened, this outburst of the Saviour's righteous indignation is the more tremendous for its long and hard restraint; it rolls like a flood around the fortress of Pharisaic pride and insolence, whence the lords of God's heritage were wont to look down and to rain their scorn upon His poor; and it was not long before that flood had loosened its foundations, and tossing them on its angry surge, had

swept them and their tyrannies on a full tide of vengeance to the pit.

Nor was the Lord the only witness for God's righteousness in that age who had thundered out his anathema against the elders of the Jewish Church, and the masters of the Jewish state. John the Baptist had blazed into kindred indignation when he saw them mingling with the throng of the poor, the weary, the wretched, who came to hear God's message from his lips. God's righteousness the publicans and sinners could bear to hear of; it had even a gracious and compassionate tone on the lips of its preacher; it was like the touch of a cool soft hand on the fever of their aching hearts. But the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees they hated with intense vehemence; it tormented and maddened them. And their indignation found utterance from the lips of their great popular preacher. It was the wrong and misery of the poor, of souls bound in the prison, lost in the night, under the rule of these arrogant and insolent doctors of the kingdom, which lent such piercing point to the Baptist's denunciation, "*Ye generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*"

It is not to be wondered at that men in every age have pored over these vehement anathemas, and agonized over the questions of personal responsibility which they force on the attention of mankind. "*The sin which never hath forgiveness ; neither in this world, nor in the world which is to come.*" The words lend a fearful reality to transgression. They forbid us finally to dally with the Pantheist's dream of transgression as a devious path to a blessed end, the first stumbling step of an unending progress, the rude and tentative beginning of the fulfilment of the counsel of God about our lives. There is a sin which remains unconquerable, even by the love and pity of the Incarnate Word ; which remains insoluble, even in the menstruum of the grace of Christ ; and which defies every effort of the Redeemer to transfigure its hideous form, and make it, transformed, the attendant and minister of the eternal triumph of His cross. There is a sin which can draw down on a man, even from Divine lips, the sentence, "*It had been better for that man if he had never been born.*"

If anything can establish the reality, and reveal in all its naked deformity the sinfulness of sin, it is

such a sentence as this. Responsibility is no dream of delirious souls; it is no bugbear of priests. It is the *man's* endowment; and Divine lips declare that he may so handle it as to cut himself off from the sphere of life, and bury himself in the pit of darkness, anguish, and despair, through eternity. It needed but this to reveal the essential horror of evil in the sight of the great Father, whose home it desolates, whose children it torments and destroys. And there were men then in Jerusalem, there was a great school of priests and doctors in Jerusalem, who provoked the Saviour's righteous indignation and wrath to utter it; and to brand them with the only unmeasured anathema which ever fell from His patient and forgiving lips. It is most important that we should study the physiognomy and physiology of this deadliest of all transgressions, that we may see where and why the Divine treatment of sin stays its merciful and redeeming hand, withdraws its healing, purifying waters, and leaves the rock hard, bare, and defiant, to be beaten by the storms, and blasted by the ice-cold breath of the outer darkness for ever and ever.

I. We will endeavour to identify the spiritual con-

dition on which this hateful epithet is branded by John the Baptist and by the Lord.

The term which the Lord here applies to the men whose vices and crimes He lashes with such unsparing sternness, is remarkable ; the more so as it is used but thrice in the Gospels—once by John the Baptist, and twice by the Lord. In each case it is aimed expressly, by name, at the same class, and presents a vivid image of the same sin. This is surely a very important indication to guide us in determining what this unpardonable sin may be. It is the sin of these vipers, be they who they may. It is the subtle, malignant, numbing poison, distilled from fangs full of the fiend's own bitterness and hate, which is deadly to all hope, joy, and love, if by chance one gleam of them have lit the darkness, or thrilled the deadness of poor sinners' hearts. It is the spirit which searches for love that it may wound it, for grace that it may poison it, for life that it may kill it, lest the world should live anew by grace, be comforted and cherished by love, and link itself on by hope to the bliss and the glory of Heaven. It is the spirit which, seeing this Love incarnate on its Divine errand, seeing the world's death-pallor tinged

with the rosy glow, and the rigid limbs stirring under the currents of a new-born life, said straight-way, "This is of the devil;" and stung the Divine One—though it could not touch the fountain of His power, the love which drew him from Heaven to Calvary—even unto death. Thrice by inspired lips the spirit which was incarnate in the Pharisaic school was branded as viperous. Read the passages, you will easily gather from them what it means. (Matt. iii. 7; Matt. xii. 10—14, 22—34; Matt. xxiii. 25—33.) The passage in Matt. iii. does not explain itself, but it is valuable as affixing to the class which our Lord so vehemently denounces the same terrible name. The Baptist saw there the same essential character, and branded it with the same epithet. What is it then? What is that viperous spirit in a human breast which God hates with utter hatred, which the merciful Saviour brands with damning anathemas, and which God, angels, and men, will cast out with horror and loathing from the holy homes which the Lord is preparing for those who were once the bondsmen of Satan and the prey of death—the homes of the new Heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness for evermore?

It is the spirit which hates, maligns, and seeks to paralyse, the ministry of God's love to men. Be sure it was no infirmity of flesh or spirit; no evil springing rankly out of man's heritage of a passionate, lustful, and erring nature, which drew such withering words from those merciful lips. It was the spirit which was hating, wronging, and tormenting the great mass of suffering sinners, the sick and dying ones all round, whom He came to heal and save. Only in the name of man—man wronged, outraged, stung to death, by these asps of malignant pride—could the Son of man bring His lips to utter these tremendous words of doom. The men who were poisoning the very well-springs of mercy with their devilish suggestions, who were crippling the healing hand of love with their tricks and subtleties of law, who were shutting the kingdom of Heaven on the wretched who were thronging its portals, who were making it impossible, as far as their malignant will had sway, that God's poor dying world should be redeemed, heard surging around them, and sweeping them to perdition, this resistless flood of Divine indignation and scorn, "*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell?*"

This surely was one of the most startling and wonderful discourses ever delivered in this world. There were the elders of the Jewish Church, the acknowledged representatives and successors of the greatest name in history. They held unquestioned the supreme seats in the synagogues, they were the recognised interpreters and expositors of the Divine law and counsel to men. But there was a deep undercurrent of hatred towards them in the popular mind ; the burdens which these men imposed in the Divine name were intolerable ; life was weary, unutterably weary, under the conditions which they laid down. Still the people heard that they were God's expositors. " If life be so very intolerable," they might say to themselves, " why, it must be borne ; God, it seems, will have it so ; perhaps human misery is not so dreadful to God : at any rate there is no help." And now imagine the thrill of amazement and half-conscious, half-repressed delight which would stir their dull hearts, when One who spake as never man spake, and whom they ever heard gladly because of the gracious words which fell from His lips, tore off the veil of this Pharisaic sanctity, and laid bare the foulness and rottenness

which were behind—declared that these were not God's ministers, but the devil's, that these burdens were the devil's burdens, this yoke the devil's yoke, and these legal subtleties the devil's traps and snares for souls. It was *the* great revelation. The yoke was broken from that hour. Men were there, a poor tattered company of followers of this poor man's friend, who were training themselves to stand up before every court and tribunal of these tyrants of souls, and say, "Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye; but we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." From that time God's good words have had a myriad independent organs of utterance in the world, and poor sinners have never been without friends. But a great battle had to be fought, a great agony had to be borne, before that day of deliverance should fully dawn for man. The Pharisees were arming for the conflict after their fashion, as well as the Lord. They had settled firmly that this merciful voice should be silenced, that this healing hand should be crippled, that this loving heart should be pierced, and that the world should remain a prison-house, full to bursting of the

sin and misery of the poor ; and already they were beginning their hellish work: "*Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him.*" (Matt. xii. 14.) Mark the occasion. A man made whole on the Sabbath day—a great healing accomplished, a great burden lifted, a great joy poured into a sad, weary heart, a great ray of the love of God sent streaming into the darkness of the world. But a Pharisaic regulation had been broken. Perish the healing, perish the Healer, but let the rule of the Pharisees live ! And so deadly was their determination that the Healer and the healing should perish, rather than that one jot or tittle of the Pharisaic law should fail, that from that hour they set themselves steadfastly to destroy Him. Do you wonder at the sequel ? "*Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.*" (Matt. xii. 31, 32.) "*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape*

the damnation of hell?" In this chapter it is precisely the same. It is the wrongs and miseries of others, of hearts bruised under the heel of the Pharisees' insolence, and bleeding from the strokes of their rods, which sits the Saviour's indignation. "*Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*" There is the whole gist of it. Robbers and murderers of souls, infesting the broad highway of the kingdom of Heaven with viperous malignity and craft, and frightening poor, trembling, crippled sinners from the gate; forbidding men to enter, when God's love had flung wide the entrance, and sent forth the summons, "*Come, for all things are now ready: and yet there is room;*" infecting the bread of life with their poison, and fouling all its springs, choking with scowls the songs of its children, and changing their prattling praises into sobs and wailing. I say again, wonder you at the sequel? Wonder you that these bitter wrongs and miseries of men stirred even the Son of man to a Divine fury of indignation, which could only vent itself in the

words, "*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*"

II. What lies at the root of this state of mind and spirit—whence does it spring?

Not from the perversities, infirmities, lusts, and vices which belong to the prodigal's character, and are unveiled in the prodigal's life. These have their own perils, chastisements, and miseries—filth, squalor, rags, pining hunger, bitter regrets. But not thus does the Saviour denounce them. The prodigal may wander too far, he may linger in the wilderness till his day is ended, but the Father follows him with His pity, and to the last yearns over him to recover him to Himself. We must turn to another, the Saviour's dear disciple and friend, to unravel the mystery of these terrible words. "*This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we*

confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John i. 5—10.) John speaks here very absolutely, like the Master; and his words present a somewhat startling collocation of thought. Our first notion would perhaps be, that to walk in darkness and to be conscious of sin, must be about the same thing. Sin is darkness. To be conscious of sin is to be conscious of darkness. He who can say, "I have no sin," must surely be living in the light. Such would be our first thoughts. John says precisely the reverse. He tells us that to become conscious of sin is to get out into the light, that to remain unconscious of sin is to abide in the darkness, and that if we say that we have fellowship with Him while we are unconscious of sin, "we lie, and do not the truth."

And this is precisely what the Pharisees were saying. "*Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice*

in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke xviii. 10—14.) They had settled in their own minds that they had fellowship with God. They had settled, equally clearly, that they were the holy ones of the world. They looked with a lofty contempt on the great mass of their fellow-men who did not know much about their Divine relations, but who at any rate were sure that they were sinners. The Pharisees, quite sure that they had fellowship with God, and feeling bound to maintain the appearance of that fellowship, had to invent a god who could be pleased with such service. Thus they were groping in the densest moral darkness, their world was a world of mists and shadows, from which every reality which might give them a rude shock, and bring them to themselves, was jealously excluded. And this world of darkness, drear and ghastly, full of bloodless shadows of their own vanity and pride, they held

forth as God's living world, His heavenly kingdom, to their perishing fellow-men. The people with the wholesome instinct of a real need, felt that this Pharisaic world was full of dreary mockeries and falsehood. But yet these men were in Moses' seat ! Ah, if this horrible Hades of theirs be the real kingdom of heaven !

That man is in darkness who never brings himself forth into the living presence of the Most High, who never brings his thoughts, his aims, his principles, his works, to the test of some higher and unfailing standard, even the standard of the Divine righteousness and truth. He knows no higher than himself, and a world like himself. He may be a pompous and even a famous professor, but he is dark, dark, dark ; he is his own god, and his only prayer is "with himself." But if a man will come to the light, will come with simple and earnest heart to God, to be judged, the first thing which he discovers is his sin. It is light which reveals darkness. It is when a man comes into the sphere of the Life and the Light, that he feels the deadness and darkness of his own poor heart. "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,*" is the first cry of a soul coming forth into the daylight ; which melts into the prayer

"God be merciful to me a sinner." Then a blessed sense of communion with brother-men around him springs up within his heart. He has found what is common to man; common sin, common need of salvation from sin. "We cannot scorn each other, brother; we cannot spurn each other; we will not torment each other; there is one enemy who is tormenting both of us. We can weep together, brother; we can pray together, we shall be saved together, and we shall live together, saved in Heaven." Then the true fellowship begins, when souls are out of the darkness, in the light of God's grace and love. Then, *"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."*

The darkness isolates. The Pharisee is alone. He has never found the common term, *"Father, I have sinned,"* wherein the human brotherhood subsists. "God, I thank thee that I am not as these men," is the only recognition of them which he vouchsafes. The habit of saying, "I am holier than thou," the habit of comparing ourselves with those whom we may choose to brand as sinners, instead of with God, before whom we should find ourselves

wholesomely on their level, easily hardens into a conviction of this kind, "I am of superior order, I am what these men never can be, my class is the elect band of the great human company, the rest are the dross to my gold, the chaff to my corn; the great assay of life but assures my privilege, and sweeps the mass with undistinguishing carelessness away." This is the Brahmun, the twice-born man of India; this is the Pharisee, the instructed man, the man separate by his knowledge of God and of the law, among the Jews. I will not follow him to England. Search and look, brethren; he is among us, as arrogant, lofty, and exclusive as ever; as spiteful to the morally sickly, maimed, and poor. The next step is an easy one. Men feeling that they are a class, a caste, of higher privilege than their fellow-men, and of loftier destiny—the legitimate heirs of the kingdom, while the mass are but hewers of wood and drawers of water at the best—soon come to regard their pretensions and expectations as property, as precious possession, which any man who speaks to the poor in the common human tones, about the matters which are their peculiar charge, threatens to destroy. In fact, it is an infringement of their

monopoly, to bring down the Divine fire through any other channels, or conduct it to any meaner souls. And the penalty of the infringement is inevitable death. The man who recognises a common human nature, a common human need, and a common God and Father to supply it, is the only devil they know or believe in, and on him they concentrate all their malignant fury, to cast him out of their synagogues and to hunt him to death. "Away with such a doctrine from the earth," they cry; "*Have any of the rulers and the Pharisees believed in it?*" If the man will not be silenced, strangle him, stone him, crucify him; away with him, away with him; he hath a devil, send him to his own place." The intense, the frightful selfishness which grows up in the heart of the man who, walking in darkness and saying, "I have no sin," gives thanks to God that he is not as other men are, is, when we see it on the scale of a sect or school, one of the darkest things in the dark chamber of history.

The fury which seizes on an elect class, proud of their spiritual pre-eminence and power, when one outside the pale stands up and proclaims a common truth, a common need, a common Father's love, a

light which lighteth every man, a home which is open to every returning step, has no parallel in the history of worldly frenzies and hates. "*And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming.*"—(Acts xiii. 44, 45.) This is a clear exhibition of the spirit which I describe. The passage in Acts xxii. 19—22 shows as clearly how deadly is its hate. And the poor, who know only that they are sinners, and who watch wearily for any crumbs of Divine comfort or gleam of Divine hope which their saintly tyrants may condescend to cast to them, repay it at last with as intense a hate. I suppose that the Italians hate, or did hate, a priest much as the poor hated a Pharisee in Jerusalem. For these men dangle the key of the gate of the kingdom within the clutch of the despairing wretches, and dash them back when they touch it, into the lairs of misery and despair. And this, brethren, is the spirit which hath no forgiveness. The sin which saith, "I have no sin," remaineth; even against God's love it is hard as adamant, and cold as death.

The Pharisee's spirit, which would dash fiercely the cup of life from the lips of a dying world, lest its own privilege should perish ; which would brand the spirit of the Divine Healer, Teacher, and Saviour of the world as devilish, and hunt it from the earth, stung to death with its viperous fang ; which holds every wide Gospel proclamation an intolerable insult, and every healing touch of Divine love a bitter pain ; it is this, brethren, and nothing which a poor lost soul can brood over in its anguish, which is the unpardonable sin. This was the Python on which the sun-bright Saviour rained the arrows of His indignation and hate. "*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how shall ye escape the damnation of hell ?*"

The man whose lusts and passions are degrading him to the brute, Heaven has hope of to the uttermost ; but even the merciful Saviour abandoned as hopeless the man who was hardening himself into the fiend.

I will not attempt to apply the subject to men, parties, and organs in our own day. Perhaps, if sermons do not apply themselves, the preacher may spare his pains. But there may be those here whom this unpardonable sin haunts as a spectre ; indeed, it

is the worst nightmare of souls. But if the cry, "*Father, I have sinned,*" be the true cry of your spirit; if the soul within you goes forth in the common confession, "We have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep;" if you would rather stand there with the publican, beating upon your breast and saying, "*God be merciful to me a sinner,*" than go down to your house self-justified like the complacent Pharisee, you may get cast off the burden from your heart, the unpardonable sin is far enough from your sphere. But if the thought is rising in your wicked heart, "*God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,*" if you are beginning to catalogue your virtues and to realise a property in your principles, if you are tempted to claim for yourself or your class even a partial monopoly of God's Spirit, if a free Gospel irritates your jealousy, if you see the throngs around the gate of the kingdom with a secret anger or scorn; if the breadth of God's Word is becoming contracted and its range of claim and invitation limited in your narrow and selfish thoughts, if a soothing feeling has stolen into your heart that you are the qualified critics of the truth, the licensed dispensers of the grace, the lawful organs of God's

light and love ;—then beware ! beware ! The viper's poison is already at work. Alas ! the spirit still reigns among us, and ever, as of old, its chosen organs are to be found among the saints and doctors of the Church.



IX.

On Restoring a Sinner.



“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”—GAL. VI. 1.

“BRETHREN,” is of right emphatic here. The brotherhood of men in Christ lies at the root of the duty here enjoined, and the power to fulfil it loyally must come forth from the same spring. Brethren, “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” “The Church a brotherhood” is a word full of the most blessed promise for man. Two great thoughts have haunted him in all ages—“God my Father;” “man my brother.” These ideas are rooted in the common nature wherein we are one; and the effort to hold and to

unfold them, through the dark confusion in which sins and lusts involve us, is the great struggle of the world's life, and, let us hope too, of yours and mine.

“God my Father.” Man cannot shake off the belief that this is the great reality of his existence; the truth wherein he lives, and moves, and has his being as a man. “And yet,” he is tempted to say, “how awfully stern is all that I know of Him. How pitilessly His law condemns me, how mercilessly His lictors wield the scourge.” The sense that a Father's wise and loving method rules it all, matures but slowly. Through long nights of weeping and days of strain we come to understand it, and the great lesson, the greatest of all lessons—God my Father—is learned at last.

“Man my brother.” Harder yet to realize, in such a sin-rent, passion-torn world as this. And yet it is a truth, as profound and vital as the other, out of which it springs. There is not one of the mighty movements which have stirred the world's great heart—rebellions, revolutions, reformations, whatever be their name—which has not borne to the front, and made legible and audible to all, this great

truth, the brotherhood of man. It was the master-note in the tocsin of the first French Revolution. Men screamed it frantically, even over the scaffolds whence human blood ran thickly as that of beasts in shambles. They were the foes of universal brotherhood, whom the mad leaders of a madder mob believed that they were sweeping out of their way. It was a dream, and like all such dreams, costly to the dreamers, and cruel to their victims; but it led the most mighty movement of modern times. While the very substance whose shadow they were madly pursuing was there, close by them, in the brotherhood of the great Elder Brother, who, "seeing that the children were partakers of flesh and blood, Himself also took part of the same;" in whom we become one with that great family whose brotherhood links earth with Heaven, and expands time into eternity.

But what have we to do with the brotherhood of humanity here? This surely is spoken of a select society, quite out of the world, and called to bear witness against the world; to condemn the world's selfish violence by its own patient charity, and by the contrast of its life to make the world's judgment

more just and sure. Thus a Jew would have conceived of it. The Jew had come to believe that this was what his own Church existed for; and there were Christians in the Apostolic Church terribly tempted to transfer the notion, and to regard the Church as occupying the room of the Israel after the flesh, in the estimation of Heaven, on the one hand, and in its relations to the wide human world, on the other. And the idea lives on.

“ We are a garden walled around,”

is a canticle which is not yet obsolete in the Church. But perhaps there is no idea more radically un-Christian than the exclusive view of the end for which the Church exists. There is no greater treason against Him, of whom the Church is the fulness, than the notion that He came purposely on an errand of selection—to pick some jewels out of the world’s dust-heap, while He left the rest carelessly to be fuel for the eternal fires. He came to assert that what the devil had made a heap of refuse to every eye but His, was all precious, was all capable of being purged from its dust and dross, and of shining again with gem-like lustre, when set in a

Redeemer's crown. The Church in its true idea is, I think, not the contrast, the counterfoil, to the world which Christ has redeemed, but its exemplar. Not the elect host called forth to fight the Lord's battles against the great world of the devil's liegemen; but rather like the *élite* regiments of an army, the conspicuous key of its organization, and example of its evolution: what they *do*, the whole force must strive to imitate; what they *are*, the whole force must strive to become. The duties and relations of Church brethren are the eminent heights of the duties and relations of all human brethren. The same Divine thought runs through them all; but in the Church they are lifted into the light, and made conspicuous by the Celestial Sun. The Christian parent, brother, friend, is just the perfect human parent, brother, friend. All that is truly and substantially human, is but the pattern of that which is Divine. In the Church this Divineness is known and honoured; its life is set intelligently to a celestial key. It is "the *prærogative instance*," to borrow Lord Bacon's term, of the truly human life. Set apart, set on high, it is set to shine. Like all that is grand and beautiful, and that seems to live under

privileged conditions in nature, the Church is the reflector of a Divine light, the conductor of a Divine fire; like the planets that radiate the great solar lustre as they pilgrim through the midnight darkness of the world. One sun makes many, charged to diffuse his lustre; and the one Sun of the higher system, fountain of all Divine light and fire, wherever his beams find a focus, creates a new satellite to drop his radiant warmth on the darkness and deadness of some inferior sphere. Christ is spoken of as "the fulness of God." *"In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."* The Church in like manner is the fulness of Christ. *"The Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."* Why did it *"please the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell?"* That He might Himself behold it and rejoice in it, or that He might impart it to the world? St. John shall answer:—"And of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." And it pleased the Son, that in the Church, His body, His fulness should dwell. Again I ask, why? That He might see it and rejoice over it? that He might call it His own, and reckon so much saved out of a wreck which threatened to be utter? or that He

might show it, and shower floods of light, of life, of love, through it, on the darkness and deadness of the world? All the voices of the Scripture and of the universe have but one answer to that question: "*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.*" "*Freely ye have received, freely give.*" "*Go ye out into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*" "*And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.*"

Whatever, then, is urged on Church members as a duty, on grounds which they only can fully understand, would seem to be the unveiling of some universal human duty, of which the Church is to show the pattern; to fulfil which man was made, and in fulfilling which alone man can be blest. The truth is, that humanity was made to be Christian. All is false and discordant, "like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh," until the law of human living, which Christ developes, and which the Church is set to realize, becomes the law of the great human world. If an apostle says to the members of the brotherhood of the Church, "*Bear ye one another's burdens,*" and enforces it by the consideration "*ye*

know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," he means to say that it is the duty of every man to bear his brother's burden, because for his sake, He who was rich became poor. He means us further to understand that until that is seen to be the true law of living in any human circle, in that circle, humanity, instead of living tolerably after a lower and selfish law, is literally not living, but has in it the power, and over it the shadow of death. By the Church, God is not saying, there is a little company of men in the world to whom a higher life is possible than is possible to the great human mass; but, see in that little company the true pattern of living for the great human mass, and believe that the power by which they live it is yours as freely as it is theirs, that it is there in Christ within touch of your hand.

We believe in the Christian Church, but not in the Christian caste—the Christian Brahmun, separated utterly in dignity and destiny from the great brotherhood of mankind. If the life of God is in a man, it is not to separate him from his brother men, but to bind him to them more closely, in the bands of a self-denying, self-sacrificing love.

It is the old question of the miracle, in another

form. Much as the miracle stands related to the whole course of the Divine procedure in nature, the life of the Church stands related to the whole life of the human world. A miracle is a revelation, a sign of a thing unseen ; even of that Almighty hand which under the veil is ever ruling the forces and maintaining the order of Nature. When the Lord lifted Himself from the pillow on which He was calmly sleeping, hushed by the storm, "*and rebuked the winds and the sea, and immediately there was a great calm,*" He did not mean us simply to understand that there was One there stronger than the tempests which had lashed to white fury those blue Galilean waters, and that therefore while He was present they were safe under the shield of His hand. That calm sleep on the bosom of the storm, that majestic "Peace, be still," when His trembling friends were cowering to His side, declared that there was One there in visible presence whose invisible presence had ruled those waters from the beginning of creation to that hour ; whose Hand might be seen in storm, in calm, in midnight gloom, in sunset glow, in golden dawn ; in all the beauty, in all the terror, which mingle their tones in the many-coloured

mantle of the world. From that time forward the vision of a restraining Hand would ever gleam forth, when they watched the tempests gathering their force in the wild ravines of the mountains, and sweeping down with banner of mist unfurled, to press their yoke upon the sullen sea, whose black waves with their ghastly hissing lips of foam shrieked back defiance to the storm. I say, they would see the Hand in all such hours, and no faithless murmur, "*Lord, carest thou not that we perish ?*" would again break from their lips. And when the mandate "Peace, be still," had again gone forth, and the morning sunlight flashed its smile over the golden rippling sea ; and when, as hot noon drew on, the lazy clouds dropped purple shadows over the glowing mist of waters ; when the evening breeze stole down from the hills with dewy freshness, and the cold shimmer of the moon chased the hot glow of sunset from the waves, and lit the weary fishers to their repose ; an unseen Presence would unveil itself in all this beauty and splendour, and they would know that this, too, was the benediction of the hand of the Lord.

And I read here of a brotherhood constituted, as

it were, by the miraculous act of Christ. I read of duties which the brethren owe to each other, of the motive which is to inspire them, of the ground on which, and the strength by which, those duties are to be done; and I am quite sure that I have here a revelation of the essential nature of all brotherhood,—the duties which it involves, the grounds on which they rest, and the mind in which alone they can be faithfully fulfilled. I am quite sure that this instinct and craving for brotherhood, which is characteristic of the human everywhere, must come hither to learn its lessons, and to be developed into a true human brotherly love. And I think that there is one great principle developed in the text, which lies at the root of the whole matter. This “brotherhood” has been the passionate dream of man through all the ages, and it lies nearer than we deem to the heart of all the great movements whose tramp has shaken the solid world. But no actual brotherhood has grown out of the dream. The dream has been dreamt, but it has left no substance behind it; it has bequeathed no legacy but disappointment and despair. “Let us be brothers, let us embrace and fraternize,” has been the loud cry of man in every era of storm and

revolution; and men *have* been brothers after such fashion; they *have* embraced and fraternized, they have laughed and wept for very joy, and then, when the ink was yet wet on their charters of fraternity, they have dashed at each other's throats. Read the history of the feasts of fraternity, and the feast of blood, the Reign of Terror, in which they issued, in that most masterly of all our histories, Mr. Carlyle's French Revolution, if you doubt the truth of my words.

“Brethren!” The word means something on the Apostle's lips. Something brotherly has been not only talked of, but done in our world. (Read Acts ii. 41—47; iv. 33—37; xi. 27—30; i John iii. 10—19.) And where is the broad contrast between the dreams which men have sought frantically to substantiate, and the reality of brotherhood which is freely offered to us by Christ in the Gospel. The one springs out of sentiment, the other roots itself in duty; the one seeks pleasure of intercourse, the other occasion of ministry; the one is content to be a passion, the other knows itself to be a power; the one will weep copious tears over a brother's sorrows, the other with brave strong hand will lift a brother's

burdens and bear them away ; the one builds an altar of incense, the other an altar of sacrifice ; the one draws its inspiration from a selfish passion, the other from the loving deeds of the Elder Brother, who laid down His life for us all. That which is of God starts from duty ; even as the Highest came not to delight Himself in His world but to die for it, and to find beyond long agony the fruit of His travail, in such love as sacrifice only can win.

The world is full of clamours about human rights—rights of men, rights of women, rights of subjects, rights of workmen, rights of servants, rights of slaves. Has it ever struck you that there is not a word about these wonderful rights in the Bible ? I read there of the duties of men, the duties of women, the duties of subjects, the duties of workmen, the duties of servants, the duties even of slaves—even as the Lord came to earth to assert no right, though all right was His, but to fulfil the behest of duty, and to sheathe His claims, as it were, in soft bands of ministry and love.

And here we are on the track of one of life's deepest and most blessed truths. Parent, brother, sister, friend, would you win the joy that springs out

of those blessed relationships, "*Deny thyself, and take up thy cross,*" and it shall be thine. Snatch at the joy—claim it, insist on rights, guard them jealously, refuse to share them—the joy eludes you. Seek how you may minister, see what burden you can lift, what sorrow you can share, what fault you can pardon, what sin you can cover, what help you can bring, and there will be a love springing up there which death can but transfigure, and which will bear riper and richer fruit, age by age, through eternity. Those will read these words, I doubt not, who know something of this. Mothers, sisters, who have fought the battles, and borne the burdens of some prodigal, who, through their long agony of effort, has grown into their heart of hearts, and from whom they have won a love which has a tinge of almost worship in it, which is their rich, their abounding reward.

Brethren, these are the true prizes of life. Beside these your golden successes look but dim. Be not afraid to win them, to wear them. Be not afraid to let your loves and your hopes go cross-bearing through life; they, too, like Christ's, will wear crowns in Heaven.

Thus much on brotherhood, its grounds, its burdens, its joys.

The one great canker of brotherhood is sin. The schism in the human unity was made, as Milton finely expounds, when man's heart went astray from God:—" *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil : whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him ? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*"—(1 John iii. 10—12.) Every act of sin makes the rent wider, because it sunders man more widely from God. Strike out the centre from a balanced system, a sun from the midst of his planets, and the confusion is complete. And discord must reign in the realm of sin. The only cure of the enmity of man against man is the cure of the enmity of man against God. He who came to refund the brotherhood which sin had shattered, saw the heart of the mischief. He began to draw men to each other, by drawing them to God in Himself. He charged them with duties and ministries to each other, of which He had given them, not the pattern only, but the principle. He asked of

them, for their brethren, the ministries which He had a right to claim of them for Himself, and which He had Himself freely offered unto them:—"So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."—(John xiii. 12—17.) That love which He sought to win from them is sin's destroyer, sin being the destroyer of human love. The brotherhood of the Church was the brotherhood of men who believed that sin, the destroyer of human, was destroyed by Divine love. They vowed themselves in love to Christ to struggle against sin, when they vowed themselves to each other. They were sure that when sin reared its hateful form in their fellowship, there would be a breach in their unity—a schism which, if the sin were tolerated, would grow wider, until it

rent the community to fragments. And so they recognised this as their primal duty :—" *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"

This restoring of sinners is the primary duty of the members of the brotherhood of Christ. Is it not, too, the great problem of society. It lies as near to the heart of the welfare of homes, of kingdoms, as of Churches. Restore the sinners and you save the State. It is the fundamental social question. It lies under all our most searching Reformations ; it is hardly touched by our most radical Revolutions. It eludes the grasp of the statesman ; it is but feebly handled by the priest. But so near to the heart of the welfare of empires does it lie, that he who can turn a sinner from the error of his ways, and restore a soul in the spirit of meekness, earns, more richly than statesmen or conquerors, the civic crown.

I. The man overtaken in a fault.

It is literally the man "even caught in a sin." Putting the case most strongly, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one, despite the open scandal and shame. The sense of our translation, "over-

taken in a fault," suggesting, I think, the idea of surprise *by* the sin as well as *in* the sin, though not the literal sense of the original, is, perhaps, spiritually not far from the truth. The word used for "sin," the word used for "restore," and the allusion to temptation, seem all to point to the case of a man overtaken and snared by a sin. In a sense, this is the true history of sin: man in Eden was sought out by a tempter and snared. We have here the case of a Christian brother; a man who believes in righteousness; a man who does not believe in his heart of hearts the devil's lie—who has a brightness within him against which the sin looms darkly, who has an uprightness there which a loving hand may restore. There are those, alas! who overtake sins; whose inmost soul searches, and is athirst for them, at least as far as the soul is awakened; there may be something deeper, some witness for God, latent even there, which one day will rise up, and lay, at any rate, the refuge of lies, the belief that sin is the good, that Satan is the God, in ruins in the dust. But they seem to catch sins as eagerly as the vapour of naphtha catches fire. They spread an atmosphere around them which kindles the faintest

spark into a devouring flame. I do not know how you can restore such. If the bent of their souls is thus madly towards evil, I do not know that you can do much to help them. God can restore them, but after long miseries. Saved, so as by fire, charred, maimed, bare; but saved. God grant that none of you may challenge that discipline. It is a fearful thing for such an one to fall into the hands of the living God.

But there are those whom sin overtakes. It is out of the course of their most earnest purpose. It comes as a perversion. It twists, if it does not break, the unity of their lives. David's deadly sin was of this character. Take that man's whole life course and you will see how utterly adultery and murder were out of the true line of it. They wrenched him aside from the high aim of his life. Such a man may yield himself to a temptation readily, as if his whole soul were in it, the more desperately because of the utter subversion of all his habits and principles which it involves, just as the strongest sluice when burst lets in the fullest tide; but it is sin to him. Paint it to him as Nathan painted it to David, and his soul will rise up in judgment against it. "As

the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die." Listen to him in his calm moments; he moans and writhes: "*Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.*"—(Psalm li. 1—4.) It may be worse with him than this. He may see no way of escape from it; he may say within himself, "I can never break the spell." He feels himself afloat on a swift current, the oars of his resolution are powerless to stem it, but he knows full well that it is floating him to perdition. He has visions of a higher life which a man might live and be blest. Ask him what he longs for in his best moments in his heart of hearts, and he will answer, "Free me from this: if this vile body is in fault, kill it; if this weak heart, purge it, no matter how fierce the fire; but give me strength to live the life that seems to me

so beautiful, so heavenly, on which my thoughts fasten, while the song of the Siren wiles me away." That man is no reprobate, though, as with David, reprobates might tremble at his sin. The fault has found him. The flesh, the mind, in a careless hour, have sent forth their tentacles of lust, and have grasped a prize. But it oppresses him; he is restless, moody, wretched. Like Launcelot, in the "Idylls of the King," it mars his life, and he knows it.

"Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west, and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it."

Not so he. Sin has caught him, and holds him as a captive. But there is an uprightness there which it has bent but has not prostrated, a love for truth and honour which it has blighted but has not killed. Brethren, take him by the hand and clasp him. Throw the cords of your love around him, and stay him in his mad career. "*Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"

II. Ye which are spiritual.

Who are the spiritual? Who knows the secret of this Divine art of restoring souls? I suppose that in any community of professed believers there will be those who will prick up their ears at once when the word "spiritual" greets them, and say to themselves, "This concerns me; here is plainly something with which I have to do. Spiritual is what I strive and pray to be, and in some measure I am thankful that I realize it. I know but little, thank God, of these storms and struggles of the tempted; heavenly things occupy my mind, heavenly exercises and contemplations are my delight. Pious conversation, pious literature, pious observances, make up my world. If any have fallen into sin, my superiority to temptation, my separation from the world, my Christian attainments, will enable me to restore them, to bring them, thoroughly humbled, to repentance and confession, and point out to them afresh the narrow path." The spiritual—those who know that they are the spiritual, and who are the qualified teachers, correctors, and exemplars to their fellow-men.

I am not sure that this is the class which is meant by the term, when we hear it on an Apostle's

lips—indeed, I am quite sure that it is not. I am quite sure that Paul speaks of a class of much simpler and humbler men. Men who are not at all sure that they are the spiritual; men who are only sure that sin is a great sorrow to the sinner, a great sorrow to the Saviour; a crushing burden on the spirit, which so fills them with distress and pity, that they can take no rest and know no joy until they have lifted it and borne it away. Men on whom another's burden, a burden of shame and sorrow which has bowed down some poor despairing brother to the dust, presses heavily as their own; who have looked into the conditions of His life, who "*Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses,*" and who find some dim image of it in their own hearts. The men and the women in a church who are so spiritual, that they are conscious of stooping from a great height to touch the sinner in the depth—a height to which, they thank God, these low and base temptations never climb—had better stay there, and leave the work of restoring sinners to those who know, too sadly, that the devil is as near to them as to the poor fallen one, and that it is by hard battle, through grace abounding daily, that

they keep themselves out of the same pit. They can see the brother's image in the sin as well as in the suffering, and feel, as the Lord did, that the poor lost sheep is the one whom it is worth any sacrifice to save.

I think this is what Heaven calls "spiritual." It is to be something like Christ, to whom publicans and sinners drew near, as a sick child draws near to the shelter of a nurse's bosom, while the whole—the spiritual, as they call themselves—stood apart in contemptuous pride. There were two once in the presence of the Saviour. The one a righteous man and a just; a man who had a right, as men judge, to hold his head high among his fellow-men—one of the recognized spiritual of his time; the other, a crushed and broken thing, of no account with any but with Christ, who was learning the first lessons of that love which makes us spiritual in the estimation of Heaven. It is worth while to read the narrative again in this connection. (Luke vii. 36—50.) I have already made it the topic of a discourse, and dwelt with special emphasis on the moral of it, "She loved much, for she had much forgiven." Brethren, ye who are spiritual,

who have had much forgiven, and who love much, if you see a poor crushed sinner who has been overtaken in a fault, afraid to lift up his head in any Christian company, afraid to claim lest he should shame the Christian name, feeling himself a dishonoured outcast from all holy fellowship, and tempted to believe—and this is the devil's crowning victory—that He who is the Head of all holy fellowship has outcast him too, ye who are spiritual, ye whose heart is tender, whose hand is healing, like Christ's, "*restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*"

I feel it profoundly important to insist on this truth, that the spiritual in the church must be those who are in closest sympathy with the spirit of Him who came into this world that He might draw sinners to Himself. This was the spirit of the Redeemer's mission; that must be spiritual which is most deeply imbued with this spirit, and which is able to work out most fully this mission of the Saviour to the world. The spiritual are those who can take God's view of sin—the view which expressed itself in the gift of Christ. A hatred of

sin, a horror of sin, so utter that the heart of the God-man literally broke under the reproach of the sin which He voluntarily assumed; joined with a love, a sympathy, a pity, for the race which sin had overtaken, and plunged into innumerable woes, so profound and tender, that He bore for them willingly the burden under which His heart was breaking, that those who were crushed by it might arise and live. A hatred of sin which, far from hardening into a lofty contempt for sinners, drew Him down to the sphere of their temptations; that, as a tempted man—one who could be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, and had like themselves to learn obedience by suffering—He might place Himself at their side.

So intense was His hatred of sin, that He could not spare one sinner to be buried in its slime and lost in its pit to God and the universe for ever—that He held His own most precious blood to be not too dear a price to pay to rescue sinners from sin's fell bondage, and leave Satan spoiled of victims, while the house of God was filled with sons. Ye that are spiritual, ye that stand beset, like Christ, with temptation, who agonize daily in the

battle-field in which your poor brother fell, who hate sin with such Christ-like intensity, that to see a human soul its victim is a bitter pain, to snatch a human soul from its chain a blessed and glorious victory—ye that are spiritual, to whom a soul in darkness turns with quick instinct, and cries, if but with the dumb prayer of pain, for aid, *“If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”*

III. Restore such an one.

Restore him. There is but one way. Restore him to God, and you restore him to his brother, to the Church, and to himself.

1. Do not imagine that *you* can restore him. Man can do just one essential service to his brother : he can bring him to Jesus, and leave him with Him. The highest are but ministers, to set the soul before God, and God before the soul. “Readjust,” “refit,” is the precise meaning of the word. That is, readjust the man’s Divine relations, and the rest will fall into the true order at once. The danger is, in our endeavours to restore a soul from sin, lest we aim at too much. The best service is

to bring him to Jesus, and leave the rest with Him. You may have formed strong convictions as to the nature of the transgression. You could discourse long and ably on the theme, to bring your brother to a humbling sense of his fault. Beware lest it be your righteousness the right as it seems to *you*, rather than God's righteousness, as God can show it to *him*, with which you are seeking to readjust him: beware lest you be seeking, under specious guise, a victory rather than a soul. Beware, above all, of homilies on transgression. Be sure that God is reading to him a sterner homily than any that can fall from your lips; or, if not, yours will be worse than useless. There is but one thing in the universe which can convert him—the vision of the Cross. Restore him. Don't crush him, lift him; lift him, as Jesus lifted that heart-crushed woman whose sorrow broke in a rain of tears at His feet; or like the Good Shepherd, who, having lost one sheep, left the ninety and nine and went after the lost one until He found it, and lifting in His arms, laid it on His shoulders rejoicing, and brought it home.

The Father's grief, the Saviour's pain and sorrow,

these are the great forces in the hand of the Spirit, whereby he that is of the Spirit, he that is spiritual, may convince and restore souls. The great matter, the greatest, is to get a fallen brother or sister to believe that the very intensity of the Righteous Father's hatred against sin, is the measure of His sorrow that a soul should be ensnared by it; that every act, every thought of continued transgression is a fresh and shameful question of the earnestness of that purpose of Redemption which sealed itself on Calvary, a fresh wound to the tenderness of the Father's and the Saviour's love. The most admirable exhortations, the most clear expositions of the duties which have been neglected, or the injury which has been inflicted, will be powerless in comparison with the thought, that he has grieved, and wronged a love which clings to him more tenderly at this moment of sin and wretchedness, because he most needs its ministries; which receives fresh wounds each moment that he hardens himself against it in pride and impenitence, and will receive the last and sharpest wound that he can inflict, if he breaks away from its pleadings, and refuses to believe

that its best and most joyous welcomes await his return.

The tenderness of the love of God in Christ to the wretchedest sinners, yea to the rebellious also, though the Church has been talking and the world has been hearing of it for eighteen centuries, is all unfathomed still. The meaning of Calvary has yet to be explored. Could we make that love to sinners which inspired the prayer, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,*" glow in our words and tremble in our tones, the Church had long ere this restored a sin-lapsed world. It is the one over-mastering power everywhere, the tale of Calvary—the one triumphant antagonist of sin. To the worst reprobates on earth, could my voice reach them, I would cry, "Care for yourselves, for Christ cares for you ; save yourselves, for Christ is saving you ; conquer this sin, for it pierces afresh the Friend who was 'wounded for your transgressions, and bruised for your iniquities,' even unto death. Abandon that sin, for there is One on high who must share the sorrow with which it comes laden ; the misery to which you doom yourself must press as a burden on your merciful Saviour's heart." If

that thought will not unseal the fountains of tears, the ablest homilies, the sternest denunciations, are vain.

Brethren, ye which are spiritual, ye who can enter into the mind of Christ about sin, and make sinners understand the measure and the quality of His love, bear ever His charge in mind, "*As my Father hath sent me into the world, even so I send you.*" There are a thousand enterprises, a thousand missions, on which the world can send its children. Christ, in the Church, has but one—to seek and to save the lost. Be ye His helpers. Spend, yea, be spent, in the enterprise to which, unseen, all Heaven is assistant, and whose fruits outlast eternity. Live for the help of souls, in their struggle against evil; live to deepen their faith in the force of the redeeming love of God. And if—for

"The Son of God, in doing good,
Was fain to look to Heaven and sigh;
Nor can the heirs of sinful blood
Seek joy unmixed in charity"—

cross-bearing, you have to fulfil that ministry; if weeping you go forth, bearing that precious seed; if, as you watch for the harvest of your toils and

watch fruitlessly, the hands hang down, the heart fails, the spirit faints, and is ready to abandon its mission in despair, remember the long-suffering patience and hope of Christ—remember what He sees, and you cannot see, of the harvest of His toil and pain beyond the river of death, and go forth to your work re-inspired. *“They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He which goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”*



X.

And yet there is Room.*



"Come, for all things are now ready." "And yet there is room."—LUKE xiv. 17, 22.

THIS is but one of the many touching and beautiful forms in which the Saviour seeks to set forth the freeness and largeness of His Gospel, and to make the sin-sick, life-weary throngs around Him understand that His love, His life, was no private gift to a company of select expectants, but God's public gift to the broad human world. Oh! the wistfulness of some of those eager eyes that were bent on the Saviour; the pining hunger of some of those hearts which were waiting for the crumbs that

* This Sermon was preached to a very large audience of the poorest of the poor. I have not altered it, but note the fact as an explanation of some of the special allusions.

might fall from His bountiful hand ! But had they any right to touch them ? What could the kingdom of Heaven have to do with such beggared, bankrupt, God-forsaken lives as theirs ? For generations, such as they had been drilled into the belief that the kingdom of Heaven was the guarded domain of the orthodox, reputable, and world-honoured Pharisees, and that they, the publicans and harlots, the scum and offscouring of all things, were scum in God's sight as well as man's, and needed simply to be swept out. And when they found that the Son of man, instead of driving them into more utter darkness, loved to see them crowd round His purity, and touch the hem of His heavenly virtue and might, it broke up the fountains of the great deep within them, it melted the rude rock of their hearts, it drew them in throngs round His pathways, it bowed them in a passion of tender devotion at His feet. They bathed them with their tears, they covered them with their kisses, and they shouted, as they attended His triumphal progress through the streets of Jerusalem, "*Hosanna, Hosanna, blessed be this King who cometh in the name of the Lord !*"

For, in truth, it was the first time that any such

King had been seen on earth, and the first time that any large and lasting benediction had reached the poor. Benign words had been spoken from on high ; there was the echo of them still lingering in the air. But the wise, the noble, the mighty, the self-styled holy of this world had intercepted and engrossed them. " They are for us—the worthy—these good words of God ; the kingdom of Heaven is our express domain. God is seeking a select company to serve Him, to be honoured with His commands, invited to His fellowship, and admitted to dwell in His palace halls on high. This class He has found—we are the men. Stand by, we are holier than thou. There is a broad line of distinction to be drawn, a line which God recognizes as well as man, in point of culture, manners, and morals, between us and you, who were altogether born in sins—a people not knowing the law—the helots of the heavenly kingdom—the hewers of wood and the drawers of water to the Lord's true congregation for ever."

They were right. There *was* a broad line of demarcation between the two great classes ; the Pharisees and the Publicans, the Scribes and the sinners, the rulers and the mob, the luxurious lords and the dog-licked beggars who lay whining at their

gates. There was a broad distinction. They were right again, for the Lord recognized it as well as man, and the Lord remembered it when He sent His Son to cast in His lot with the toiling, suffering masses, and share with them the priests' malignity and the rulers' scorn ; and when He rang that warning into their startled ears which has been so terribly sustained by their history, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of Heaven before you.*" Yes, God remembered the distinction which for ages they had been drilling into the minds and hearts of the great company of the poor. God remembered it, and *they* remember it now. "*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven, and ye yourselves thrust out.*" The most damning sin in God's sight, and that which He avenges most fearfully, is the making the gate of the kingdom of Heaven, whether by doctrine or conduct, too narrow for the great masses of mankind. This was *the* condemnation of the Pharisaic school—that having the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, they neither entered themselves, nor would suffer the throngs to come near the gate. We will look more closely at

I. The scene and circumstance of this parable:—
“And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched Him.”

It was a grand banquet, at the house of one of the chief men of the State. The rich Jews held sumptuous Sabbath-day banquets, like another people, not unlike the Jews in genius and conviction, and with a great name for holiness, in these modern days. Indeed, it was their great day for dining out. It is but fair, however, to say that the custom probably arose out of the need of entertaining those who came up from a distance to attend the worship of the cities; so that originally it would be a banquet chiefly for the necessitous and the poor. This would give a point, and, let it be also said, a limit, to our Lord's exhortation in the 12th verse. This was manifestly a specially magnificent entertainment. Contests for upper seats were going on, giving occasion for our Lord's rebuke. I daresay the crowd were allowed to hang about the doors and look in, like dogs watching for the crumbs. As dogs they were treated, and as dogs they probably felt, before these magnates of the kingdom. Their wistful looks

struck the Saviour. I think there must have been something especially touching about the aspect of the poor crowd around the gates; something which He thought might draw tears, even from the eyes of a chief Pharisee, if they could be got to look at it, and so He spake these words:—"When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." One of the guests caught up the phrase: "*the resurrection of the just.*" "Yes!" we can fancy him saying, "that belongs to me, that is a matter about which I have a right to speak." The heavenly kingdom was familiarly conceived of among that class as the scene of a sumptuous banquet; at least, that was to be the first act of the great drama. The notion was founded, probably, on the imagery of Isaiah xxv. 6: "*And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*"

One can readily picture him. A demure Pharisaic saint, a man whose evidences were all perfectly clear, so clear in fact that judgment and the love of God were quite needless additions. His salvation was plainly decreed; why should he vex himself with spiritual conflicts, benign ministries, and the daily burden of the cross? He had all the pious platitudes of his school at his tongue's tip. One of them slipped easily off, as he lifted up his eyes with appropriate fervour—" *Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.*" His sleek self-satisfaction, his unclouded conviction that whoever might fail, he should be there and feast on the fat things of the heavenly kingdom, drew this parable from the Saviour's lips. It is terribly stern to all presumptuous Pharisaism, it is benignantly pitiful and attractive to all self-distrustful ignorance and sinfulness, all self-abandoned wretchedness and despair. It is emphatically *the* parable of the kingdom. It is the charter of the poor and outcast; it claims the pariahs of a narrow and selfish human society, as the citizens of the great universal kingdom over which God rules in love. It establishes His relation to even the poorest and wretchedest outcast, trudging with naked and blistered feet along

the rough highways, camping under the hedges, sleeping on the door-steps, or moaning in the prisons, of the world. All such, but specially the most wretched, are here called to and claimed for the heavenly kingdom, and yet, though the myriads of the weary and heavy laden have in all ages pressed into it, "YET, THERE IS ROOM!"

This leads us to consider

II. The boundless comprehension of the call. "*A certain man made a great supper, and bade many;*" and first, remember, first, the very men who turned the bidding into scorn.

The guilt of sin, in this and kindred parables, is not the feature which is put foremost, but rather its misery. I may venture to say that in dealing with us, God seldom puts it foremost, save when for us He laid the whole burden on His well-beloved Son. God sees its misery in *us*; God lays its guilt on Christ. It is as wretched, starving, dying, that He looks on us. There is no aversion, no hate. The guilt which He must hate is there on Christ, borne away into the waste. But pity, profound, unfathomable pity fills him, as He sees the prodigals wandering further and further into the wilderness, so hungry,

so weary, so hopeless of help, that they resign themselves to share the husks and the sties of swine. And He made ready a great supper—the bread of the Father's house, the bread by which the angels live—and sent swift messengers to call them in. *Them!* His prodigals—whom do you mean? I have only one clue. The hungry, the thirsty, the weary, the wounded, the dying, are the “called” everywhere in the Book of God: and just because they are the hungry, the weary, the wounded, the dying. It is just that which touches this great bountiful King. It is the lost sheep which is most tenderly sought; it is the sick child which is most heedfully nursed; it is the starving soul which is most largely fed.

If your hearts were open to this parable you would feel that it is just your neediness which gives you, through grace, the strongest possible claim on His pity, sympathy, and aid: you would plead this as your title-deed—the right which He gives to you in Christ to a place at the Gospel feast, a mansion in His home on high. But are these “*the many*” in the parable? Was the outcast pagan world called first and at once to share in the bounty and benefaction of the King? No. There is a mystery here

which we cannot fathom. We cannot understand fully how there was to be an appointed time; a time, too, far on in the world's history, but not in the history of the universe, for the gathering in of the Gentile with the Jew to the great feast of the Gospel. It seems a dark mystery—that long pagan night—but we see into it but a little way. The secret things belong unto God. We can measure the visible dispensations, but we know not what ways of God with human souls that darkness veils from sight. We shall understand it one day, when the clear sunlight of Heaven falls upon it all, and our cry will be, "O the depth of the riches of His wisdom and His love!"

I believe that the purpose of God in the calling of the Jews thus early was to make them His witnesses and missionaries to the Gentiles, as Joseph, Daniel, and Paul became. But they would not. They would not even recognise their own want of the blessing. They fed and puffed themselves with the chaff of privilege, but they would have none of the bread of God, nor should any one else have it. Thus much they had firmly settled. Woe be to any Divine messenger who should venture to pass through their coasts on his way to call the starving Gentiles home!

Their taste was for the bread of this world. When God spake to them of His banquet, as St. Augustine says, they opened their jaws and not their hearts:—
“*And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*” The streets and lanes are to be ransacked, the highways and hedges are to be stripped of their vagrants, and all are to be brought in. “*Compel them to come in.*” Why? By what right? Because they belong to the King, and

his treasures are theirs. The servants had a right to say, laying hold of each poor tramp, harlot, beggar, publican, "Come! my lord has need of thee, and thy need of him and his feast is greater. Come! these squalid rags are not the dress which went with thee from his home, these dirty crusts, these shrivelled husks, are not the bread which he had stored up for thee there, and which had been thine hadst thou remained. No! '*He would have fed thee with the finest of the wheat, and with honey out of the rock would He have satisfied thee.*' Come! Come! put on the wedding garment; a braver robe than the angels wear! Come! satisfy thy hunger at the King's banquet-table; it is richer food than the angels taste. Look on thy squalor, remember thy need, and come!"

The words of the commission are evidently intended to describe the pariahs of human society. The highways and hedges, the courts and alleys! What scenes of filth, squalor, wretchedness, anguish, do the house fronts veil! Open the window and look through. A room smaller than your parlour, and twenty people crammed into it. They lie there in the reeking rags they have worn all day. They steam in the heat of the room; the stench sickens,

and almost suffocates you. Old men, hoary vagabonds, hardened reprobates, are there ; and young girls, and wives and mothers, and stout lads and children, all curled up there, trying to slumber, as reckless, as ignorant of bare decency as the beasts that perish. The oaths, the obscenities, the blasphemies that are current fill you with a shuddering horror. There are young lives growing up there, poisoned in their innermost springs, rotten to their innermost core. Even well-trained Christian philanthropy is tempted to say, " Here all is rotteness, let it be swept out into the waste." Blessed be God that even to them, in His great name, we can send the invitation. Not into the waste, but into the King's banquet-hall let them be compelled out of their sties and stews, to be clad with the wedding garment, and to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Wherever men are packed most densely by want and misery, wherever hunger preys most fiercely, wherever vice riots most foully, wherever decency is most dishonoured, and manhood is most discrowned, we are not only permitted, thank God, we are bound to bear the message, and to invite, nay, in the name of God's great love

for them, great need of them, to charge them, to compel them, to come in.

The banquet is spread, the hall is lighted, behold all things are now ready. The angels stand attendant to minister to the guests. Guests He must have. Said I not rightly, that He needs *you*? A home must be filled; who should fill it but the sons? Shall God watch and wait for you, while you are halting and hanging back? Let the men with the fields, and oxen, and homesteads, set *them* before the kingdom if they will, but you! What have *you*? What is *your* life? A long, wearing wrestle with misery, a daily burden which you are daily tempted to fling down in despair, a ceaseless hunger, a constant pain. Come! fling off the rags, and put on the wedding garment; throw aside the husks, and feed on the living bread; quit the sty, and enter where you were born to live, a son in the great Father's home on high. You want pardon. Listen to the promise:—" *Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.*" You want righteousness. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and confess Him, and His righteousness is yours. You want power to put down the tempter, and tread the world's blandish-

ments and threats under your feet; cry unto the Lord, with whom is everlasting strength, to rescue and to quicken you; take arms from His armoury; take strength from His spirit; take courage from His victories; and see the world, the flesh, and the devil, which have long tyrannized and tormented you, stricken, writhing, and at last slain, under your feet. "*Come, for all things are now ready.*" "*Come, for yet there is room.*"

III. Let us endeavour to estimate the force of this assurance, which brings home the invitation to each one of us. "*Come, for all things are now ready,*" "*and yet there is room.*"

"Grace no more endures a vacuum than nature," says a shrewd commentator on this passage. The fact that there is room is the very strongest invitation; those words on God's lips are the mightiest appeal. That there yet is room we shall endeavour to develope under these three aspects of the same great fact, the one fact which meets us everywhere, "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

I. There is room in the Saviour's heart.

Till that heart is full, till the largest desires of that love are satisfied, there is not a call only, there

is a *claim* on you to come. Rich, educated, and respectable, or thieves, harlots, and outcasts, the call is to all, the claim is on all alike. Because of the human likeness which is not yet obliterated, because of the human faculty which is not yet squandered, because of the human capacity for Divine influence which is not yet killed, He not only calls you, He claims you, in His heart of hearts, for there yet is room. Till that heart is satisfied! Think you that it is satisfied yet? Does He see of the travail of His soul and rest in the satisfaction of His desire, the fulfilment of His hope? Look round you. What a world is wrestling, writhing, weeping, sinning, rotting, under the eye of the merciful Saviour; who so loved it in its guilt, and so pitied it in its agony, that He "left those glorious realms and royalties above," to bear its load, to purge its sins, to soothe its anguish, by His own shame, agony, and death. The saving a world inspired that sacrifice:—"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But let none dare to limit it: "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be

saved." It was a world's redemption at which He aimed. It was a world's guilt, a world's agony, which He bore upon His spirit. It was a world which, as He drew near to the last scene, and entered the cloud which hung around Calvary, He clasped and drew to His heart. "*And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.*" And there is room still. Oh ! the matchless patience and hope of the Saviour. For nineteen centuries, just the gleanings, just the first-fruits, let us say, of the human generations have yielded Him the tribute of their love, and afforded Him but the earnest of His joy. And the very class which he sought most eagerly has been well-nigh barred out from His kingdom. The sects have been wrangling around its gate, and have driven the great throng of poor sinners away.

Flesh and blood is the one bond which He recognizes as the basis of His claim. "*Seeing that the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself also took part of the same.*" And lest men should think that it was the finer clay and the blue noble blood which He, the Highest, was thinking of, He went to a manger in the stable of an inn for His cradle, He went to a workman's cottage

for His childhood's home. For the rest, that the homeless might find Him a brother, He had no roof to shelter Him, and depended, as no beggar in Judæa depended, on chance ministry for His daily bread. Was there one poor pariah who was hunted out of all reputable fellowship, and who withered under the scornful scowls of rulers and priests? He sought him, and placed Himself by his side, in full front of the malignant bigotry of his time ; covering him, if not to the eye of man, at any rate to the eye of God and of the angels, with the robe of His purity and love. The reproach of the publican, the reproach of the harlot, the reproach of the criminal, fell on Him. There was no depth which He did not fathom, to show what room was in His heart for every penitent : the poorer, the wretcheder, the guiltier, the better, for then was Satan most signally despoiled of a victim, and then did God most triumphantly recover a long-lost son. I say there yet is room, while one child of flesh and blood still writhes in the devil's bondage, while one prodigal still stays his gnawing hunger with the food of swine. Come ! there yet is room. We ministers of the Gospel

are bidden to affirm it. By His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, by His precious death and burial, by that untold depth of sorrow, by that unutterable mystery of pain, by the omnipotent impulse of that love which bore Him on to the triumphant consummation, we dare affirm that His love is as deep, His sympathy as tender, His call as earnest, His grace as free, to every sinner now listening to these words, as when in the hour of His anguish He plucked the dying thief from the grasp of the destroyer, and bore him, justified and sanctified, to His home in Paradise—the first trophy of His saving power, the first of the willing captives who shall swell with you His triumphal train.

2. There is room in the great Father's home.

The Father is the head of the home. At the root of all His dealings with you lies the fact that you were once, and are still His child; prodigal, profligate, contemptuous of His very name, it may be, but His still; belonging to the home, needed by Him to make it complete. Lay hold on that word "Father," and dare to give full meaning to it; no other word will be needed to explain how there must be room while you are wandering. No

elder son, however immaculate, can fill the place of that young prodigal in the Father's heart. This word alone explains the parable in Luke xv. 3—7. The wandering sheep was a wandering child. A father's love, a father's pity for his prodigal, hungry, naked, and wretched, alone explains the leaving the ninety and nine behind, and seeking the lost one at any cost, till he should find it and bring it home. And the Lord declared the Father to the world. I have spoken of the Saviour's love; measure the Father's by His. He bore the cross, He lifted the cup and drained it to the very dregs; it fell empty from His hand on the cold ground of Gethsemane, but the bitterness of it passed into the Father's heart. Tell me, ye who can measure fatherhood, what pangs were borne by the Most Blessed, when the Son fell fainting on the damp ground, with the prayer, "*Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,*" or sent up that piercing cry from Calvary, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" and He knew that for you He might not spare. Is the love which bore that, and gave that for you, already satisfied? Can the father rest while you are staggering blindly on the road to everlasting darkness and

death? Can He look round on the recovered sons and miss the absent one, without sending many a pitying, longing thought after him, to clasp him, and draw him home again from his drunkenness and harlotry, or the bitter want and misery in which he pines. Take your own fatherhood, motherhood, sisterhood, or brotherhood, to help you to understand the cry of that Father's heart, "there yet is room." Do not misunderstand the matter. Love may be outraged finally. There may come a point where even the wisest, most patient, most loving father is constrained to cut off the son from his family, and extirpate each tender memory from his heart. But He has not cut you off. I am bound to affirm that you are not yet outcast. Your place still waits for you. Sin-sick, wretched one, there yet is room.

3. There is room among the blessed ones on high.

"*In my Father's house are many mansions.*" Think you they are all filled? Heaven is large; it is but thinly peopled yet. But what have the denizens of these blest abodes, the clear-eyed, the pure-hearted saints and angels, to do with me, but to

loathe me and cast me out, full as I am of lust, crime, and deformity; sick, wounded, "*from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, full of wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores!*" That is the Pharisee's scoff, never let it cross your lips. They watched the Saviour once, as the publicans and sinners gathered round Him to drink in His gracious words, and this was the anathema which they hurled at Him, the most poisoned in their poisonous store, "*He keepeth company with publicans and sinners.*" But Jesus carried the cause to a higher tribunal; He appealed from the earthly to the unearthly spectators of the scene. While earth's popular teachers and competent critics were affixing the broad seal of the world's anathema alike to Jesus and to His Gospel, how grandly does He interpose the record of a higher tribunal, and interpret to that mute assemblage the thought of the spiritual world—"Earth mocks at Him who would gather her outcasts, and preach salvation to her forlorn and lost, '*But verily, verily, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.*'" Believe it, brethren. Believe that the whole spiritual world throbs in sympathy

with the Father and with Christ. Saints and angels, cherubim and seraphim, watch with rapt expectation the issues of a work which cost so much sacrifice, and expends so much love. It is the one theme on high ; how Heaven is to be filled, filled with the fruits of the Redeemer's travail and the trophies of His grace and love. "*Worthy is the Lamb,*" they sing who have already entered the heavenly mansions ; but the strain halts, the harmony is thin ; Heaven still waits for you. Myriad myriads yet are wanted to swell the strain—the great company of those who love much, for they have much forgiven, alone can make the harmony complete. The saints who have gone home are still expectant ; their Heaven still lacks its most lustrous ornaments, themselves their purest and most transporting joys. To you, and far on beyond you, the Saviour gazed when He brought forth the world out of the dark womb of chaos, and when He heard in Eden, wailing through the universe, the first moan of a sinner's pain. Beyond the sorrow of that hour, beyond the ages of man's guilt and shame, the Saviour gazed and foresaw the day, when a great company which no man could number, of all nations

and kindreds, and peoples and tongues, should stand before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palms in their hands, and crying with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."

He gazes on to it still. To realise that vision, to fill that home, to gather that innumerable company of blessed ones, was worth the bloody and shameful cross. But if that fail, it is all as shameful waste. Sinner, shall it fail? Will you rob Him of your presence there? Will you rob Him of your song? Will you rob Him of His joy? There is room there, room in the inner circle, room among the first-born around the central throne. And from that throne He pleads; nay He leaves that throne, He puts by that splendour, He wears the nail-prints and the thorn-scars, and the Man of Sorrows stands once more before the gate of your hearts. "*Behold, He stands at the door and knocks.*" Lift up the bars, fling wide the gates, and bring Him in with glad hosannas. He shall lodge here with you through life's brief night, you shall lodge there with Him through the long day of Eternity.

“COME, THEN, FOR ALL THINGS ARE NOW READY.”

Come with all your rags upon you, the best robe awaits you, the rings, the banquet, and all the expression of the intensest joy. Come! they are watching there the tear which is brimming in your eye, the sigh which is bursting from your heart, with rapt expectation. They see you turning in purpose to the Saviour; they see your trembling steps tottering to His Cross, and their harps already ring forth the prelude of that exulting strain, which will swell at last into the burst of Heaven's most joyous, most triumphant minstrelsy, when the lost prodigal returns, and the ransomed family is complete:—“*These thy sons were dead, but they are alive again; they were lost, but they are found.*”

And then the travail of creation shall be ended—the patience and the hope of its King. The burden of life shall crush no longer. The pilgrim of the wilderness shall have found his home, the bondsman of sin shall have found his freedom, developed by toil, enriched by pain, immortal by death. The night of sorrow shall be for ever ended, remembered but as the husbandman remembers seed-time when the breeze rustles through

the ripening corn. And once more the Voice shall be heard, as when of old it blessed the young creation in its beauty, but charged with a joy whose depth and fulness He only can measure who has borne through the weary ages the burden of such a world as this. Again, the eye of God shall rest on His creation—the new creation, fruit of His travail, child of His pain; and again the benediction shall fall on it as a glory, and shall rest on it for ever, “BEHOLD, IT IS VERY GOOD.”



THE
DIVINE MYSTERY OF PEACE.



I.

The Disciples.



"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."—JOHN XVI. 33.

OUR worst troubles are invariably with ourselves. A man can look the world and the devil in the face very calmly, if he be but pure within. May God but unite my heart to fear His name, and then "Get thee hence, Satan; thou has nothing in me." A heart right with God can find, like the Saviour, blessedness in suffering, and glory even in shameful death. The Lord could say, "*The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified,*" when the gloom of Calvary stretched across His path, because "He and the Father were one." In truth, men dread themselves more than they dread any living being

or any terrible thing. I mean, the men who have ventured to look into the darker depths of their nature, and have pored over the mystery of "self." Deliver them from that, and there is nothing which they cannot face serenely. Those filled with the assurance which animated the Apostle, "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,*" may well be calm, for what can separate them from His love. Women chained to the stake have worn a smile of ineffable peace and joy, as the hope of glory which was in them brightened into vision; delicate maidens and children tortured on the rack have seemed aglow with a rapture such as we may be sure no victor on a well-fought field, on which was hanging the fate of empires, has ever known. Those who have looked into the Divine mystery of peace in Christ, and abide in it, dwell "*quiet from the fear of evil.*" For them, evil is no more.

"*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me, ye might have peace,*"—the peace of a nature at one with itself, because at one with God. In terror no more of the storm that is without, of the dread abyss of unbelief that is within: safe, because sound and whole—the only true and complete salvation possible for man.

Strictly speaking, no being, no thing, in this universe can hurt a man but himself. The citadel of a will neither angel nor devil can storm. It was the avowed belief of the old magicians, that if a man's will remained firm against all their terrors, the hosts of devils raging around were powerless for harm. They held him to be absolutely safe while he remained master of himself. And, indeed, so infinitely high and pure are the joys which spring from those inner fountains, so terrible the woes and miseries which spring from the inward selfishness and lust, that few who know what it is to live, would hesitate to part with all the riches and splendours of earth's mightiest empire, if they might but receive the assurance from God's own lips that they should be saved from those inner sorrows, and filled with those inner joys for ever. Let the Spirit but bear witness with my spirit that my being, eternal as God's, shall be a blessing and not a curse to me while eternity endures, and then you may lead where you will ; none of these things have power to move me. The citadel of my spirit is sure for ever against the malice of human and infernal powers, and I bear about with me, wherever I

move, the springs of a joy which is akin to the joy of God.

This assurance is in Christ, and in Christ alone. *“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” “These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”*

“THAT IN ME YE MIGHT HAVE PEACE.”

I have ventured to call this the Divine Mystery of peace. It is a mystery, for it lies in the relation of persons to a Person, in the region which no plummet of understanding can fathom; in which a spi-

ritual sense, that sense "which judgeth all things, even the deep things of God," alone has discernment of the truth. Where it said, "In the understanding of truths which can be developed in the form of propositions, or in obedience to principles which can be cast into the mould of laws, ye shall have peace," there would be no Divine Mystery in the matter; the understanding would in that case take cognizance of the process, and charge of the results. But the matter lies far deeper than this. It is in a Person: in a relation to a Person, which is elsewhere described as being "in Him," that our peace abides, or rather that we abide in peace. It is part of the great mystery of godliness, how, amid the storms of the outer, and the strifes of the inner world, a soul can rest, trust, and hope in Christ. It is a mystery which the world knoweth not, and cannot know; it is of those things of Christ which the Spirit taketh and showeth to the believing heart. Its springs are deep and unsearchable as is the relation of God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to the redeemed. Much in that relation comes out and is visible to the eye, and cognizable by the intellect; but much lies hidden in the depths unknown, un-

knowable, like the nature of life or the love of a friend. But it is permitted to us to search into it; nay, we are bound to search "all things, even the deep things of God." We are despising the Divine Mysteries when we give up the effort to search them, as if they were insoluble riddles. The measure in which we know what may be known, is the measure in which we possess and take joy in what may not be known. Those who use their reason most largely in the effort to search the Divine Mysteries, are those who may hope for the fullest vision, and the most perfect knowledge of God. But the mystery remains mystery still.

Before we proceed to consider at large the nature and conditions of our peace in Christ, one broad fact, which underlies the whole subject, demands some words.

I. The power of Christ to speak peace to the human spirit lies in the fact that He alone, of all beings in the wide universe, can touch its innermost springs, and make it whole and sound within.

There are those who seem to entertain the notion that their life is just the tool or the toy of invisible spiritual powers—that the devils drag it one way,

the angels another. They speak of temptation as if they thought that it simply depended on the question whether the assailants or the guardians were at any particular moment the stronger, which way, heavenward or hellward, they go. I suppose that there are human lives vain enough and light enough to be tossed to and fro, as the plaything of the spirits; and lives, neither light nor vain, seem strangely bent in these days on giving themselves over into their hands. But there are few of us, I suppose, who are not brought by some stern crisis to feel, with bitter sorrow, that while a host of devils cannot drag a soul into a sin it loathes, legions of angels are powerless to stay it, when passion is mad for indulgence, and, like Israel, it has spoken the "I will" of lust.

There is a dread revelation, which comes to us at some moments with overwhelming force, of the powerlessness of all good spirits, human and angelic, when they seek to save us from ourselves. Who has not learnt, in hours which sear their records on the memory, the essential loneliness of a will? There is a sanctuary of the being which the dearest footstep can never enter; there is an inner spring which the tenderest hand can never touch; there is

a depth which the most loving eye can never fathom ; that Holy of Holies of the spirit, within whose veiled silence we realise the full meaning of the " I." "*I have sinned ; " I " have perverted that which is right, and it profited " me " not ;* and " I," as far as man or angel can help me, must bear the burden, and bear it for ever. The dearest friends, the mightiest influences, troops of beloved and devoted defenders, may stand round a soul in the day of its temptation, powerless to save it ; powerless, beyond a certain point, and that not a far one, to help it in the hour of its bitter need. There may be those here who have seen, weeping tears of agony while they gazed, a prodigal break away from his home into the wilderness ; they knew full well the hunger, the filth, the rags, the penury, for which he was bent on exchanging the wealth of the father's house, the warmth and the brightness of its love, but they were powerless to hold him back. A mother, a sister, whose life would be joyfully laid down to save him from the doom of the life which he covets, may cling round him with fond, persistent tenacity ; but if he *will* forth, he must. They can but plead, and pray, and moan ; to save him is beyond their power, simply because

they cannot save him from himself. Is there any that can save? This is the question of questions. "*O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*" The answer, "*I thank my God, through Jesus Christ my Lord,*" contains the very marrow of the Gospel. "*There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, for the law of the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus hath set them free from the law of sin and death.*" The whole philosophy of Christianity is there.

He who spake these words of peace to the disciples, can give a new mind, a new heart, to man. "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you: let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" And the fundamental condition of this is the power of the Lord to work within. There, in the centre of centres, the core of cores of the being, He can enter, work, quicken, dwell. To Him there is no closed sanctuary, save such as is wilfully barred by unbelief. But other barrier there is none. "*Christ in you,*" says the Apostle, "*the hope of glory:*"—in you, in the very heart's core of what makes a person, a new, Divine, incorruptible self. "*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth*

in me." *"Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible. Even of the word of God, that liveth and abideth for ever."* On this power, then, fundamentally rests our peace in Christ. If it be a fiction or a dream, this power of Christ over the inward discords, the inward deadness, this power to quicken and to develop the Divine life within—then peace in Christ is a dream. In the world we shall still have tribulation, but there will be no escape from it; in that case, none can overcome the world.

In considering the meaning of peace in Christ more largely, it is well to see simply, at starting, the true point on which the question hinges, the true foundation on which the assurance rests. It is the power of Christ over the inner springs, the power to make us whole and sound in heart and spirit. Salvation, remember, is not safety, but soundness; the healed man is saved. But let us beware here lest we fall into a dreary distrust, which may easily deepen into a deadly unbelief. We say that our faith stands in the power of the Lord to quicken, renew, and transform the being. Souls "groaning within themselves" over the ever-fresh insurrections of passion, self-will, and lust, are

tempted to cry impetuously, "Then why has He not done it. Why this weary struggle, this wearing anguish, this dread of the abyss of self, lest we sink into its pit and perish? Why the storm and strife in the midst of which the Almighty Saviour left even the beloved disciples? Why the warning, '*In the world ye shall have tribulation,*' while almost in the same breath He exhorts them, '*Be of good courage, I have overcome the world?*'" It is the old, old question—the oldest difficulty of the spirit—the long day, the long way, of God; the long culture of which He thinks us worthy; the far, great prize for which He will have us wait. From within, not from without, He wills to save us. The new life is to grow, and by growth to take possession of the being as its own. It is as yet but as a germ in the centre, unseen of the world, unseen of ourselves. We feel it daily stirring, as the earth may feel the stirring of the corn in the winter. By the fostering grace that planted it alone it grows. "*And He said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground: and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the*

blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come."

An old rude version of the history is in Judges ii. 20—23, "*And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel: and He said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died; that through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. Therefore the Lord left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered He them into the hand of Joshua.*" Little by little, as all great things gather strength and greatness, the Lord's new life grows patiently in all honest and believing hearts. It has the winter's frosts, storms, blights, to struggle through. Checked, nipped to the eye, it but roots itself more deeply, and works new spheres of the being into the substance of its life. And the Lord's eye is on it. He whose hand can touch the innermost springs and guide the most vital currents of the human spirit, is its husbandman; and He

who saw the fruit of the travail of His soul beyond the winter of the ages from Calvary, expects, because He assures its fruit. "*These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.*"

II. Before we pass on to consider what these words may import, in the fulness of their meaning, as unfolded by the teaching of the Spirit and the experience of the Church, it would be well for us to ask ourselves what was the nature and the measure of the assurance which they afforded at that moment to the little, troubled company gathered around the Lord. The two are not intellectually, though they may be vitally synonymous. We see what they could not see in the Saviour's words; though their souls were calmed and cheered, as our souls are calmed and cheered, by the vital comfort which the mere utterance of them by such lips imparts. Abraham's faith was implicitly what ours is explicitly. We know what and why we believe. We know what God has unfolded of Himself and His methods, to awaken, engage, and justify faith. Abraham "believed God" implicitly, and his faith vitally comprehended it all.

And we may be fully sure that, in their then state

of knowledge and faith, the comfort which the disciples derived from the Saviour's words was not such as it would need any deep theological learning, or conscious consideration of the relation between them and God, to draw forth. Something spoke home to them, the comfort and strength of which passed into them like the light and glow of the summer's sun; which they realised by the vital warmth it kindled in the core of their pallid, trembling, desolate hearts. To us, the mystery unfolds itself more fully. We see how our peace standeth in the harmonious action of the Persons of the Godhead in the work of our redemption.

I. In the Fatherly love of God, as declared by the Incarnate Son.

II. In the sacrifice of the Incarnate Son, the Lamb of God who beareth away the sins of the world.

III. In the indwelling of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, whom the Saviour departing sent forth.

IV. In the great victory won by the Captain of our salvation, expressed in the words, "*I have overcome the world.*"

These will be the topics of the four succeeding

discourses, in which I shall endeavour to set forth the nature and assurance of the peace which in Christ is ours.

But for the disciples there was something preliminary to the full understanding of all this. They could not comprehend it all in a moment; they grew to the understanding of how broad, deep, and eternal were the foundations of peace which Christ had laid for them, but for the present they believed simply in Him and were at rest. The child does not understand in childhood all the worth of the mother's love; how much that love endures, how much it sacrifices, at what cost it cherishes the nursling confided to its ministry by the Lord. The child feels the warmth of the love, and cherishes its life at the glow. It comes to understand, in time, oftenest when that love is lost to it, how much it was worth. It was expedient for the disciples that the Lord should "go away" from them. They never knew Him until He had gone. Their knowledge of Him, like His love, was glorified by death. They must lose Him, to love Him as they ought—as we shall love the lost ones in eternity.

But it was not a too late love, like that of Joseph

and Nicodemus, who had to spend on the corpse that loving ministry which they had been afraid or ashamed to offer to the living body of the Lord. They lost Him but for a moment, that they might find Him for ever; they lost Him from earth, that they might behold Him, with all the touches of a brother's sympathy and tenderness still fresh upon Him, at the right hand of the throne of God in Heaven. The tendrils of their love, which had been rudely unbound from the Man of Sorrows when death, as they thought, had wrenched Him for ever from their embrace, lay trailing but for a moment; they soon lifted their quivering fibres, and twined them around the glorified Man, the risen Christ, to clasp Him through eternity.

I think that there were two thoughts which the Saviour, in this closing hour, sought with intense desire to fix in their minds and hearts. They were simple, and near at hand, but deep as His own being—the milk of their infant discipleship, but charged with all the elements of the nutriment of the highest and maturest life.

1. That their present and their future were linked with His own indissolubly.

2. That His were as indissolubly linked with God.

1. Their present and their future were linked with His indissolubly.

"Believe in God, believe also in me." The world would learn, in the course of ages, what as yet they saw but dimly, how much those words assured. But they knew Him surely as the Christ of God—the anointed One, of whom glorious things had been spoken by the prophets, and who came forth from God to accomplish in its fulness all that God's love had promised, all that God's hope had forecast, for man. Nothing could be more grand and splendid than the Jewish conception of the Messiah; and they shared it intensely. They believed that by Him every glowing picture of their prophetic oracles would be realized; that by Him every hope of the most sanguine patriotic heart would be fulfilled. It were mere idleness to suppose that their faith was never crossed by doubts and questions, that no cold shade ever fell upon the sunlight of their joy. The humble estate of the Great Master, "the tender plant," "the root out of a dry ground," "the marred visage," "the stricken form," the beggar's lot, the outcast's shame and pain, must have sorely distressed and amazed

them. We cannot doubt that, with their high hopes of what Messiah would be and do, they must have fallen away from the Man of Sorrows, but for the spells which His love had laid on them. He, poor, despised, rejected, as He was, had become to their hearts and hopes great as God ; but their loving trust must have had hard struggle with their doubts and questionings, though it won in the end a triumphant victory. His great aim in all His intercourse with them was to root those affections so deeply, that no shock could dislodge them ; to bind them by the cords of love and the bands of a man so indissolubly to Himself, that no force which man or devil might put forth could tear them away. The discovery of all that He could be to them and do for them, He left willingly to time and to the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He was content to make them familiar with Him as the elder brother of the little close-knit company, which had plodded so patiently with Him for years round the cities and highways of Judea ; the elder brother, who had shared, with the unfaltering fortitude of love, their lot of hunger, cold, and nakedness, the scorn of the world, the scourge of the ruler, the hate of the priest ; whose

tenderness to them had trembled in every tone, and emanated at every pore; who had stilled the storms, and spread the desert with food for them, and who had made it the great aim of His sorrowful life to root in their hearts the conviction of how indissolubly He was bound to them, how surely the comrades of life were the comrades of eternity. "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me : And I give unto them eternal life ; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all : and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.*"

And this end He amply gained. They felt in their heart of hearts that they belonged to Him. They knew instinctively that in all the vague visions and hopes of a glorious future which seemed to gather around that lowly form, whose lowliness had flashed into splendour on the Mount of Transfiguration, they had indefeasible right to share. They felt their right to be with Him; they felt that the right of their love (to borrow beautiful words)—

" So indefeasible would be,
That when His spirit wonn'd above,
Theirs could not stay for sympathy."

How vague the vision was, it is hard for us to estimate; perhaps it is as hard for us to estimate how firm was their grasp on the future which associated itself with the person of their Lord. He and they were one. It was the great lesson of life which He taught them while He yet abode with them in the flesh. And He and you are one. "*Bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh,*" is He. "*How, know ye not that Christ Jesus dwelleth in you, except ye be reprobate?*" If you have fixed your heart on the world which slew Him, and is ever crucifying Him afresh and putting Him to an open shame—if your affection and hope are there, your own hand unbinds the bands by which He knit you to Himself through His redemptive work. I need not tell you that you are not one with Him, you know it; though He still remains the elder brother of the family, whose flesh and blood you share. If the heart of Judas is in you, I do not say you must go forth from Him; your own hate will drive you forth—to your own place. But if, even after a sin as deep as Peter's, you can look up with tearful, trembling eyes and say, as you lay bare your heart before Him, "*Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love*

thee," it is unbelief, as shameful as it is grievous to the Saviour, to refuse to say, "He is in me, I am in Him." "He and I are one eternally."

2. He who had bound them to Himself so indissolubly, was Himself as indissolubly one with God.

This oneness with Christ would be the well-spring of their purest comfort: out of His oneness with the Father a glorious joy and hope would rise. He and the Father are one. Binding them to Himself, He had bound them to the Father. There was a joy set before Christ by the Father, a future which would make the cross illustrious, and the shame glorious, and in that they knew that they must share. He declared that He and the Father were one in the deepest depth of His humiliation and sorrow; they knew then that His path of death and shame must be a way, a Divine way, to the most blessed and transcendent results. All that God could hope for the future of the universe, was staked on the patience of that Man of Sorrows. God's eye must see beyond the darkness, the vision of that day, with the promise of which the whole universe travails; a promise whose fulfilment that patience would assure.

Believing, they were content to wait for it; and to reckon that the sufferings of this present life were not worthy to be compared with the glory which would be revealed in them, in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God. If the Father was one with that lonely forsaken man in that hour, if in that depth of sorrow He could say, "*Alone, yet not alone, for the Father is with me,*" the Father would be with them as they passed through the same. For them there could be in the universe no God-forsaken darkness; He, with whom they were one, had passed visibly through denser darkness to the home of God. Earth and hell lost all their terrors in that presence; powerless to shake their sublime confidence, as the stormy seas to quench the sunlight, or the wrack of Heaven to unsphere the stars. He willed that they should be with Him in His glory. He had won the right to will their glory by His own subjection to suffering and shame. There His will and the Father's will had entered into new and more fruitful concert. The will that revealed its oneness on Calvary, the will wherein the Father and the Saviour were one, subdued, by that living sacrifice, all things unto itself. "*Father, I will that they also, whom thou*

hast given me, be with me where I am : that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me : for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." That will also was founding "a world."



II.

The Father.



"Jesus saith, I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also; and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him."—JOHN XIV. 6, 7.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."—JOHN XVI. 33.

IT has been said already that the right and the power of the Lord to speak peace to the human spirit rests on the fact that He alone, of *all* beings in the wide universe, can make it whole and sound within. Salvation means soundness. A soul united to fear God's name is saved—saved from the only thing which can destroy a soul, inward insurrection and discord; the only pit that can gorge it, inward selfishness and lust. From that deadly strife the

Lord can deliver it; from that horrible pit the Lord can save it. *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."* *"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."*

We have spoken of those moments of dread experience when the sense of the utter powerlessness of all good spirits, human and angelic, to help us against ourselves, against the sins and lusts which most easily beset us, bears with oppressive weight upon the spirit. Mother, sister, wife—man's visible guardian angels surely—may agonize in vigilant effort to shield a beloved one from temptation, or to support him against the pressure. Legions of spirits, hosts of influences, may be there assistant, in vain, in vain. They can but watch with streaming eyes as the prodigal breaks away into the wilderness. Will he ever come home again? Is that parting of spirits to be eternal? God knoweth, and God alone. All that is left to us to know is, that there is a region in which every human spirit passes beyond the sight and the touch of every other spirit, and is absolutely, awfully, alone with God. So

dread does this mystery of being, this freedom of a personal will, seem to men, that there are millions of our fellow-men whose theology regards it with something like horror; their one hope is that they may, no matter at what cost, attain to the renunciation of it, and lose the sense and the burden of personal existence, by reabsorption into the Supreme. This is the fundamental hope of the Buddhist. This is the passionate aspiration of a religion which numbers among its devotees, it is said, one-third of the human race.

Does the Gospel open a new and more blessed prospect? "Miserable man that I am," can the Gospel open to me the hope of deliverance from the evil which is in me, and which threatens to become "me." "*I thank my God through Jesus Christ my Lord.*" "*Christ hath delivered me from the bondage of sin and the curse of the law that I might receive the adoption of a son.*" There lies the whole marrow of the Gospel. "Power to become a son," is what the Lord has brought to man, to me. The Lord is the Redeemer of slaves, that He may give them the right and power to be sons. He is the Healer, the Purifier, the Glorifier of

men—not of spirits only, but of men. Body, soul, spirit, He redeems; the man in His wholeness He makes pure, sound, strong, possessor of a Divine nature, and conqueror, through that Divine nature, of hell and of death. Heirs of God He constitutes the sons; that is, heirs of glory, and of all that belongs to the glorified universe, which God shall redeem from the bondage of corruption, to be the transfigured home of His transfigured sons, pure from stain, from pain, from death, eternally.

The Lord who speaks peace to us is the Power of God to the accomplishment of this hope. He can enter the inner sanctuary, He can touch the hidden springs, He can search the deepest depth of your spirit, and there, in the core of that "I" which the poor self-tormented Buddhist finds to be a burden too grievous to be borne, can form Himself, the hope of Glory. To know this, as spirits know, is to be saved. "*This is the true God and eternal life.*"

I have to consider, in the present discourse, what seems to me to be the fundamental element of our peace in Christ—the peace which springs from the

contemplation of the Father whom the Son hath revealed. *"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it you. Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name : ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs : but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name : and I say unto you, that I will pray the Father for you. For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."* Nor is the revelation of the Father private and peculiar to the disciples. It is spoken of in the broadest way as being patent to all. Even the unbelieving Pharisees were accused of having both seen and hated both Christ and the Father ; while our Lord testified, *"He that seeth me, seeth Him that sent me ;"* and of that mission He declares, *"I am come forth from the Father and am come into the world, and again I leave the world and go to the Father."*

To know the Father of our spirits is to be at

peace. He who can declare the Father, and make men believe in the name and the love of the Father, lays bare the secret of their peace. The aim and end of the work of Christ may be expressed in the sentence, He came to make men know the Father, that they might live. And this raises at once the question, what is absolutely fundamental in Christianity, what is the Gospel truth of the Gospel? Many will find little difficulty in answering, that the atonement is the very marrow of Christian truth; and that, in any statement of the grounds of our peace in Christ which aims at anything like a methodical treatment of the subject, the atonement ought to stand first; the atonement, the sacrifice offered by the Lamb of God on Calvary, being, according to this view, the condition precedent to the declaration of God's Fatherhood in Christ to the human soul.

I feel this to be a profoundly important question: most vital, and most worthy of close examination and thought. It is not a question which it would be profitable to wrangle "*more theologico*," but one into which it is well worth our while to look calmly in the light of the word of God. It may be

expressed simply thus, Does the atonement constitute or does it reveal the Father to the sinful world? Is the atoning work of Christ the declaration of the Father, the way of the Father in the reconciliation of His alienated sons; or does it make Him or rather re-make Him their Father, able, after the acceptance of that work, to feel Father-like, and to declare Himself as a Father to men.

I regard this as almost, if not altogether, the most vital theological question of our day. On our answer to this question the clearness and rightness of our thoughts on Christian subjects very largely depends. Is God the Ruler simply to the alienated and rebellious—the Father only to the reconciled and submissive sons? I answer that, in speaking of the revelation of the Father as fundamental, as that on which the whole structure of our redemption rests, I seem at any rate to place it where it was placed by the Lord. I suppose that all devout readers of the New Testament will feel that there is one of the Gospels which, beyond the others, contains the revelation of the spirit and the interior life of the Lord, and of the great ends for which

He knew that He had entered into the world. It can hardly be otherwise, seeing that this Gospel records most fully the discourses of the Saviour; and those especially which were delivered at the most critical times, in the most critical scenes, and before audiences to whom the Lord felt specially bound to make His witness emphatic and clear. And what is the main burden of the Gospel according to St. John? I do not quote isolated texts. In nothing have theologians more mangled the WORD of the Bible than by quoting its words. The word must explain the words. The whole tenor of a passage must explain its particular or partial statements. If a man cannot read *the word* with open eye and heart, special texts are not unlikely to mislead him. The widest and the wildest oppositions of creeds and churches have been strong in texts, wrenched out of the harmony of Divine truth. A bit of flesh is a very poor sample of a body, as combative theologians might remember with profit when they are sampling the word of God.

I would ask anyone who wishes to receive the truth of God about this great matter, to read

through calmly and thoughtfully the Gospel according to St. John, and to ask himself what is the chief burden of this most important and pregnant portion of the Divine word. What name occurs in almost every paragraph? what authority is pleaded for almost every statement? what revelation is forced, with all the earnestness of the Redeemer's spirit, on the people who surrounded Him? what sin is charged most constantly on those who refused to listen to Him? what name was revealed to them? what name was dishonoured by them? Let a man read the Gospel thoughtfully, that he may answer to himself these questions, and he will learn that the whole burden of the Saviour's word was the revelation of the Father as a Father to mankind.

It may be answered that we have no right to isolate the Gospels from the Epistles; that without the latter the former are incomplete. I believe it most firmly. The Epistles very largely occupy themselves with the fact and the nature of the atonement. Its place in the scheme of the manifestation of God cannot be overrated; and the shallow argument that the atonement is a se-

condary matter, because the Lord dwells so little on it in the Gospels, cannot for a moment be allowed. The Lord's whole speech is the whole book. If the atonement be in any sense secondary, it is secondary only to the Fatherhood, out of which it springs. To me, the Epistles as well as the Gospels are full of this most blessed truth, that the great God of Heaven needed no work of satisfaction or payment of ransom to make Him a Father even to the rebellious and prodigal children; the Father rather needed the atonement that His fatherly love might declare itself in all its depth and fulness, and that such a Father—the righteous and holy Father—might establish a way by which He might meet and clasp His recovered sons. The Epistles seem to me as saturated with this truth as the Gospels. The fifth chapter of the Romans is as explicit about it as the Gospel according to St. John. But, without question, the chief topic of our Lord's discourse, specially to the Jews, to whom He most especially came, is the Father; while, in the Epistles, the atoning work of the God-man is most fully set forth. What can this mean, but that the one is fundamental to the other?

That what the Lord came to declare by His word, THE FATHER, men were to realize through His work, which the apostles, by their preaching and their epistles, were to expound to the world. To know the Father is the one absolute need of a human spirit. In the most awful moment of His life the Lord declares it. The atonement is needed that the Father may be known by and may reclaim His sons; in order that, in knowing Him, they may know one in whose righteous rule standeth the welfare of the universe, which rule, therefore, must be honoured beyond breath of stain; and who, in the fulness of His love to the sons whom He is reconciling, pays that honour at dearer cost than dear life, that they may know that they are reconciled to the very righteousness and holiness of God. God was in Christ, not seeking means of reconciling Himself to the rebellious sons, but reconciling the world unto Himself. Out of the fulness of that Father's love to the rebellious also, the yearning of that love for their recovery and return, the atonement came forth. *"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one*

die : yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have now received the atonement."

Is the gift, then, the condition of the love, or is the love the fountain of the gift? Is it Christ only that the Father loves, and men through Him? or is it men, for whom He gave Christ, that He might be able to love them perfectly in Him? Are we to conceive of God as saying through the ages, "My fatherhood is, and must be in suspense till my attributes as a Ruler have received a full satisfaction for sin?" or are we to hear Him say, by every word of promise which He uttered, every ray of hope which He inspired, "It is fatherly love which has spared you, which has guided you, which has wrought on through every act and dispensation towards the appointed time, when it could pour forth its righteous

and holy fulness in the gift of the well-beloved Son, to die for the world." *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."*

To me there is something terrible in the picture of the God whom I am called to believe in and to love, waiting for some equivalents of anguish due to Him as a Ruler, before He could sink the Ruler in the Father; and needing to be turned from an alienation to a reconciliation by the awful spectacle of unutterable, unmeasurable pain. But the name of the Father, and the very pain and shame of Calvary, become glorious when I contemplate them in Christ, who came forth, sent out of the bosom of the Father—"His Father and our Father, His God and our God,"—to reconcile the world. In this doctrine, Gospels and Epistles are harmonized; and Paul, the expositor of the atonement, is at one with the beloved disciple and the Lord.

I speak of the peace of a spirit in the contemplation of the Father as revealed in Christ. It rests

on the assurance that the God with whom He has to do is a Father in His heart of hearts. Philip touched the true key-note of human need in the cry, "*Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*" He knew but little what he asked. He knew not that Gethsemane and Calvary lay between the prayer and the revelation of the Father to the world. He knew not that the work of atonement as well as the word of revelation must be accomplished, before man could fully know the Father and live. But to know that this is the essential groundwork of the relations between us and the God of heaven, makes the vision of peace possible. As a great one of old said, "We begin to see the beginning of peace," when once we get the eye fairly on the word-Father, as the name of God. The right and the power to write the word Father instead of the awful unknown Name, would have spared Paganism, as it seems to our short-sighted judgment, a long death-agony, and would have reared an impregnable barrier against the invasions of sin. It is ever among the fatherless, the souls lost in the night, in whom the very memory of the Father's house is dead, and in whose hearts the name wakens no responses, that the devil

riots at will, and lords it tyrannously. Show the Father, and the tyrant falls from his throne. "*I beheld Satan, like lightning, fall from Heaven,*" said the man Christ Jesus, when the glory of the Godhead, full of grace and truth—in other words, full of the Father—first shone upon the world.

I might set forth, as the first element of that knowledge of the Father, which is the beginning of peace, that the Lord gives a living form and substance to our vague, dread notions about God.

"*He that cometh unto God, must believe that He is.*" "This is an instinctive knowledge of the human heart," say the rationalizing writers, both in and out of the high places of the Church. "This is a truth of natural religion," we are told; "destroy the Bible, that truth remains true, and would be able to reveal itself in its own light to human hearts." There is a truth in this statement, which we thankfully recognize; but there is a deep untruth. The belief in a personal God has struggled without a revelation in all ages into human hearts. Without a revelation, I say; I mean by that, a formal, verbal revelation. For Paganism, for Judaism, for Christendom, it remains absolutely true, that no man knoweth the

Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. What knowledge of the living God may be in Pagan hearts, is there by revelation. The light of the world everywhere and always is Christ. God has His witnesses ever before the world. But to Paganism, destitute of the Word, the revelation has struggled faintly, like sunlight through dense mist; and whenever for the moment the veil seemed to grow thinner, and some glow as well as gleam of the sunlight appeared, the mists have never failed to close up again, and make the day of this world a murky, shivering night. Nowhere without the Word has the sunlight fairly shone. There has been a diffused light, brighter or fainter, through all the ages of darkness; but this diffused light ripens nothing: the earth pines for the sun. And long and bitter has been the struggle to read the name of the living God, among the very noblest nations of the world. Well may Paul speak of "*feeling* after God, if haply they might find Him." He knew with what agony they had felt through the darkness, cried through the night, till then in vain—and yet not in vain. Every nation has strained towards the light, and caught it for

a moment. Revivals there have been, everywhere ; revivals of hope and life, to be followed by relapses into the darkness, the coldness, the dreariness, of death. The truth was there—the Being of the living and personal God ; but it was too far. As an observer, searching for some dim nebula on the far shores of the universe, catches it for a moment and loses it again, he has seen it, he believes it to be there, but the veil has covered it again, he can catch it no more—so the Pagan mind has searched for God. No nation lived in the full sunlight of truth, till “ *God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, did in these last days speak unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds ; who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high ; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*”

The Lord lit up the gloom of life : He filled the world with light by living in it, and now to every

age the invisible appears. The unknown God is known and named—The Father. "*From henceforth we both know Him and have seen Him.*" We see Him in every work, we hear Him in every word, we know Him in every expression, of the man Christ Jesus; and the fact that He is there (passing by, for the moment, the cost at which He is there), in the midst of His children, a God at hand, and not afar off, a God revealed, and not hidden, a God whom a man can reveal, and whom, therefore, a man can know as a living person, and not a nameless mystery or a vague shape of terror, brings us near to the region of peace. But peace is still beyond.

But be our sorrows what they may, be our struggles what they may, be our sins what they may, we have an advocate ever present, ever potent, in the love of a Father's heart. We fall into the hand of neither judge nor foe when we fall into His hand. A Father may judge, it is the most awful judgment; a Father may afflict, it is the most dread chastisement; but behind all, beneath all, there is sustaining strength, there is sublime joy, in the thought that the awful Name, for which man in all climes and in all ages has been searching, writes itself

Father, that the mystery of mysteries in the universe is a Father's heart.

But we use the word Father with timid, trembling lips; we let our old dread of the Infinite paralyse our filial trust. We imagine that we are bound to use the word with limitations, and qualify confidence by large admixtures of that reverence which a sense of His infinite distance inspires. But it is just the consciousness of that infinite distance which He is striving to abolish; it is just that paralysing fear which the word Father means to destroy. Dare, then, to stretch the meaning to the utmost. Pray for the spirit of adoption, whereby "Father, Father," may be the constant outcry of your hearts. Ask what ye will that a child may ask, and a Father may grant, and it shall be done unto you—for the Father Himself loveth you. His highest joy is to bless and enrich His sons. For the Father is the very type of pure, unselfish, self-sacrificing love. Of all love, I suppose there is none so pure, so unselfish, as a father's love for his child. A father's love is learned in the lore of suffering; it knows, as none other upon earth knows, that man's purest

joys spring up from fountains hard by the altar of sacrifice. Its end is another's welfare, forgetful of its own. The parent's love counts no gifts which are lavished, no toils which are endured, for a child. It fears no danger, it shirks no burdens, it dreads no death, if the child may but live and be blest. There is a hard, stern man, before whom his dependents tremble, and of whom his friends would as soon ask a self-denying kindness, as they would ask Dives to doff the purple and don the rags. But that fair young girl can lead him where she will with a silken cord, and bend him to her pleasure. He will hold a life's toils nobly repaid, if she may never know a moment's care or sorrow, and be lifted by his ceaseless struggle to a higher level of life than that on which he fell. What parent is there whose love does not grow by sacrifice? What mother does not yearn most tenderly over the prodigal, whose sins have left broad scars upon her heart? The parental is the pure unselfish devotion—children live by the life-blood of their sires.

And is it otherwise with God? Shall we trace the vein of pure, unselfish devotion through the

human seams of being, and dare to say, "there is a fault, the vein is lost," when we enter the Divine. Nay. It streams down from the Divine into the human; man can love and sacrifice as a parent, and live by sacrifice, because sacrifice is the life of God. God is love, and love is sacrifice. Love lives in the life of the beloved. It can pine in silence, and find high joy in pining, if the dear one is glad, and rich, and strong. Sorrow, straitness, weakness, become sacred if they but add contributions to another's life. *"And ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though He was rich, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich."*

The Father has not preached a homily on sacrifice; He has lived it. The world's Master, for love's sake, has become the first-born of sorrow, that the children might have joy in Him—the first-born of death, that the children might live. That love which inspired the purpose and planned the methods of Redemption, prays you to stand by Calvary, and measure its force and its fulness there. A Father would die ten thousand deaths rather than watch the death-agony of a child. *"The*

Father spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all." He marked the tottering steps of the cross-crushed victim; He heard the taunts; He saw the goads; He knew the horror of the darkness into which the beloved of His heart was passing; He saw the thickening glooms as the death-shadow gathered around His thorn-scarred brow; He heard the piercing cry of the victim whom He had bound for the altar, as the sin of the world let fall its crushing burden on His heart, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" and He held the cup of death to the submissive sufferer's lips. In that dread hour the Father, for your dear sakes, did neither shrink nor spare. It was the Father's love which the Son was revealing through His own. It was the measure of the words, "Our Father which art in Heaven," which He was giving to the world.

And this is the love out of which Redemption springs—the Fatherly love of God. The whole work, from the first promise to the last consummation, is the way of the Father to bring home His sons. To believe this is to begin to live the life which is eternal. To this the soul, weary of sin,

weary of self, turns instinctively, as the flower to the sunlight, as the infant to the mother's breast. Till a soul begins to feel after the Father, you may thunder your condemnations, you may press your appeals on it, utterly and hopelessly in vain. The feeling after the Father, as an instinct, an impulse, not yet shaped into a thought, is the first fruit of the movement of the Spirit over that darker than the primeval chaos, a sinner's discordant and desolate heart.

Arise, then, sinner, and come. "*The Father Himself loveth you.*" What! me?—loveth me? Yes, you. Does one filial murmur, "My Father," break the dreary silence within you? does one ray of joy at the thought flash up in your heart? Oh, might I but believe this truth—the Father Himself loveth me! Take home the truth, believe it, clasp it—it is yours. The Father loveth you, and claims you as His Son for ever. It is this love which draws you to the Saviour, and bids you behold the Lamb that was slain on Calvary to bear away your sins. It is this love which bids you stoop under the Cross and lift its burden, that you may know the fellowship of the Saviour's suffer-

ings; and it is this love which shall raise you at last, sanctified by sorrow, purified by death, to wield the sceptre and wear the crown, in the Jerusalem of the redeemed on high. "*Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world.*"

"THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU,
THAT IN ME YE MIGHT HAVE PEACE."



III.

The Lamb of God.



"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."—JOHN I. 29.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."—JOHN XII. 32.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."—JOHN XVI. 33.

THE first Gospel record in the Gospel according to St. John is, "*The Word*," "*who was with God, who was God*," "*was made flesh, and dwelt among us*." The second is, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*." The Incarnation, as we have seen, was the manifestation of the Father; the work of the Incarnate One was the reconciliation of the Father and the world.

Not the reconciliation of the Father *to* the world, for His coming was the gift of the Father, the outflow of His love to man. Nor simply to reconcile the world unto the Father, unless you understand that the atonement is the way of the reconciliation of the Father with the world. He had come to reconcile the world unto the Father, by opening the way by which the love of the Father could righteously reveal itself to man. The atonement is the meeting ground, the only possible meeting ground, of man and God. Thither the Father comes; thither He draws the sinner. Other meeting ground there is none. *"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* *"Who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."*

It was the very last thing which those Jews were thinking about, a Redeemer from sin, when they sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to John, to ask him, Who art thou? They, too, remember, had their dream of peace. They were afflicted, tormented, under the iron yoke of the Roman dominion; to them it was intensely galling that God's elect freemen, the people whose national liberties

had been founded, and oftentimes defended by terrible judgments, by the visible hand of God, should pass under the yoke of pagan conquerors, and be indebted to the intolerance of the lords of this world for liberty to pay their worship to their Heavenly King. Their fierce interruption of the Saviour, "*We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*" shows how deeply the iron had entered into their very hearts. They hated Cæsar with a fury of hate, second only to that with which they hated Him who came to declare the Father, instead of the splendid warrior and conqueror, to the world. While they cringed slavishly before Pilate, and said, "*We have no king but Cæsar,*" that they might make the Roman their tool in hunting incarnate Truth and Love to a bloody and shameful death, they were raging against Cæsar, and cursing him in their hearts. They had a dream of peace, and they needed it badly enough, the wretched, enslaved, tormented people, whose fetters their struggles but locked more tightly on their quivering limbs; the sport of masters who repaid their raging fury with a smile of lofty, imperturbable scorn. They needed, badly enough,

rest, deliverance, peace. And they dreamed a dream of it—thus :—

A great conqueror, a strong king, shall arise for us from David's line. He shall lift up the standard of the Lord God of Israel; He shall plant His armed foot on Zion, and the myriads of Israel shall swarm to His banners. The ancient spirit of the people and their conquering chiefs, "of Gideon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthæ, of David also, and Samuel and the prophets," shall descend and inspire the host. The Lion of the tribe of Judah, with Divine, resistless force, shall sweep through the world on His conquering mission; before the onset of His armies, Rome and every worldly power shall fall. The Lord's elect nation shall pass up once more to the world's high places; the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains; the law of the great Lawgiver of Israel shall rule the world in righteousness, and we, delivered from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us, elevated and purified by the strain of this glorious enterprise, shall see the dream of our hearts realised, and shall thus enter into rest.

Their minds were full of such dreams and hopes,

as they marked the career of that wonderful man, who was drawing the multitudes forth into the deserts, and proclaiming, with a voice which shook their nation to the very centre, "*Repent ye—repent ye, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.*" But not thus, rather quite otherwise, must a man and a people enter into rest. It is just that dream of our own hearts, that watching for a visible external regeneration of society, instead of beginning at once the work within, which makes peace impossible. No glorious, God-like form, but a poor, tear-stained, woe-stricken brother—no splendid, shining conqueror, but a bleeding victim, stricken through the heart by their transgression, was to be their guide to peace. Away from the kings, away from the standards, away from the throne, to which they were ready to lift Him, He led them to a cross, a corpse, a grave. "Enter alone each one of you this sanctuary of sorrow and sacrifice; learn what it is to live, by learning here what it is to die—to die to sin, to live to God; learn the lesson by my cross, my grave; and then, beyond the cross, beyond the grave, believe and wait for the kingdom of Heaven. That kingdom, to those who have known the fel-

lowship of my sufferings, and have learnt by suffering to cease from sin, shall transcend the dreams of the most vivid imagination, and fill eternity with praise and bliss. But the way is there, '*Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.*' For that people, for you, for me, the way of peace is by that Cross on Calvary, through the knowledge of Him, of whom the prophet writes, '*He is despised and rejected of men ; a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief ; and we hid as it were our faces from Him ; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth : He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment : and who shall declare His generation ? for He was cut off out of*

the land of the living : for the transgression of my people was He stricken.'"

To the Jews watching for a king, and a career of splendid conquest, John presents "*The Lamb of God.*" He who bears away man's sin, bears away man's burden ; He who can silence the clamours of accusing sin, and hush the terrors of remorse-stricken conscience, has the right and the power to speak to us peace.

I have said, and argued at length, that the deepest foundation of our peace lies in the revealed truth, the Fatherhood of God—the Father as revealed in the Son, the Saviour of the world. To know that the name of the awful Unknown Being, before whose infinitude we have been trembling, is the Father ; to know the measure of His Fatherly love and tenderness, by the sacrifice which it was willing to offer, the suffering it was willing to bear, the death it was willing to die, that no prodigal or rebel should get beyond its cords and perish : to know that He whom man, the child, was made to know and to serve with filial sympathy and devotion, away from whose sympathy, away from whose service, man must perish like a plant whose earth,

whose air, whose sunlight, are gone, is seeking Him with the most constant self-sacrificing Fatherly love; to know that the home wherein alone a son can rest and be blessed, is not closed against him, but all unbarred, the banquet spread, the light gleaming afar, the door wide open to invite, to compel, his entrance; to know that there is a place in that Father's house still vacant, which he, the self-abandoned, alone can occupy, a place in the Father's heart, still aching for the joy which his return alone can give; to know this, as He can make us know it, whose dying anguish on Calvary was the unveiling of this love of God, is to see something more than the beginning of peace. It is the righting of the centre of a disorganised system, the sphering again of an unsphered sun, which brings once more the satellite members and powers of the being into harmony with each other and with the all. The drawing of the heart of the rebellious, wretched, desperate son to the Father, the first mute cry of the spirit, "My Father," when it gets its eye on the home which has never been shut, and the heart which has never been steeled against it, even in the very frenzy of its sin—this is the first

beginning of Redemption. It is the beginning of the new order and concert of the disordered insurgent powers within, in which alone lies the peace and the hope of the spirit. This is the new creature, whose first infant cry, first sign of life, first pulse of hope, is the word, Father—Father, murmured out mutely in the ear of God. No contemplation of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus, of the mission of the Comforter, of the Author and Finisher of faith, can bring peace to a human spirit, if there run not through it all, this response to a Father's voice, this joyful yielding to a Father's entreaty, this hope in a Father's grace and mercy, this power to cry My Father, which is the first fruit of the striving of the Holy Ghost within.

And there, you may be ready to say, let it rest. *"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And*

bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." The reconciliation is complete—what need we more? If man's fatherhood were the measure of, as it is surely the key to, God's, there would need no more. The father, the son, on earth, bound in the bonds of a common sinfulness, have each something to forget and to forgive: they can agree just to bury the past, and put it out of sight for ever. Confession the father demands; confession the son, if his repentance be real, delights to offer—and the ruptured relation is restored. But there is no perfectness, or aiming at perfectness, in this. The human father's restored confidence cannot meet all the needs of the child's spirit, and satisfy all the conditions of its peace, absolutely and for eternity. God is not only *a* Father, He is *the* Father, whose restored love is to be the joy of the child's heart, the light of the child's life, the rest of the child's spirit, for ever. THE Father includes in His Fatherhood and its manifestations, all that is needful to satisfy every instinct, sympathy, judgment, conviction, of the child's nature; while He must equally reconcile

Himself, in the wholeness of His nature, to the child. It is no casual yearning of a Father's spirit, which may find a passing expression; it is the complete Fatherly nature, in the justice, righteousness, holiness, sacredness, of its love, which has to manifest itself to the world. Therefore it is by the Atonement that it declares itself. The atonement is the act in which the wisdom, the righteousness, and the love of God, do not *feel after* a harmony, but *have* and *show* their harmony, in dealing with a guilty apostate world.

In things human do we not find, that in proportion to the depth of a child's transgression is the difficulty of the work of reconciliation? When the transgression has been slight and passing, a passing word of forgiveness, a shake of the hand, a glance of the eye, proclaims reconciliation. Where the transgression has been deeper, the son, before he can rest in the reconciliation, needs to be assured that the parent knows the depth of it, sees the guilt of it, and yet is ready to extend to it a forgiveness which is well considered and mature. A slight forgiveness he cannot trust to. He fears that the parent does not know the worst, and that the worst may come

up at any moment, to destroy the reconciliation. He says, let me be sure that my sin is known, that all its consequences are measured and comprehended, in order that I may feel assured that the forgiveness has full validity, and may dismiss all burden and care from my heart.

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” There learn how God comprehends your transgression; there see how righteously God has put it away. Behold how He magnifies His righteous law in the very act of forgiving; and how all that your spirit tells you that you should suffer for such sin against such a Father, has been suffered for you by your Daysman; by One who can rightfully stand as your representative—the man Christ Jesus; the second man, the root-man, the Lord from Heaven.

The forgiveness which man needs, must speak through every organ of his being, and express the mind of every attribute of God. The love of the Father, which glows round the sinner's heart, and draws forth its responses, must show also grounds on which the reason can rest with satisfaction, and which will remain immoveable, incontrovertible,

through eternity. The sinner who has sinned like man can rest in no slight and facile reconciliation. The suggestion, "Don't worry; don't torment yourself about sin; look at the goodness, the love, which expresses itself in the whole creation, and be at rest;" which seems to sum up the creed of many who take what may be called the broad view of Christianity in our day, gives neither peace nor comfort to the sinner; in his more earnest moods he drives it as a shallow sophism of the devil from his heart. He *will* see its blackness, and he is minded that God shall see it. His spirit could never rest in a forgiveness which was a light passing over his sin by the Lord. He goes forth to meet the Father, but he understands perfectly that it is the Righteous Father, who hateth sin, who cannot dwell with sin, who cannot so much as look upon sin, from whom his soul is searching. A father who will half shut his eyes on the sin cannot help him in that anguish. A righteous Father, who comes to meet him as a sinner, to treat him as a sinner, to help him as a sinner, to save him as a sinner, is what his soul demands; and therefore next to the sentence, "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among*

us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth," stands the word, "*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*" The Father whom you seek is there. The Being who can speak peace is there. Seekest thou the Father? "*God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.*"

Lord, I believe—I believe in Thee, O righteous Father, through that atoning work which is Thy way to me, my way to Thee—help Thou mine unbelief.

The nature and the grounds of that peace which is ours when we behold the Father in the Son, reconciling the world unto Himself, will appear as we consider—

I. That in Christ, as the Lamb of God, we have the expression of the mind of the Father about sin.

II. We see in Him the satisfaction offered, which is due to the Father by consequence of sin; and,

III. The power of the Father to condemn sin, and by His mighty love, which won its chiefest triumphs on Calvary, to destroy sin for ever.

I. The work of the Lamb of God expresses the mind of the Father about sin.

You cannot do a sinner worse service than by helping him to put away the burden of his sins lightly and easily from his heart. Let him bear it; let him faint under it; let him learn to loathe it; let him gather from the horror of his own spirit how it is hated and loathed by God. Then lead him to Calvary; show to him the God-man, to whom sin is intensely hateful, laden with the burden of it, even buried in its gloom; losing sight of the Father's sympathising eye and hand, so great was the horror with which it filled Him, so utterly must sin be out-cast from God; and let him measure there both what the words "*made sin for us*" may mean, and the Father's estimate of its deadly nature, its damning work.

Peace means something from those lips. The Father, whose heart passed with the well-beloved Son through that fearful agony, in speaking peace to the sinner, forgives a sin whose nature He has

sounded to its very depths. He knows it, as you can never know it; in the flesh of the man Christ Jesus He shudders at it as you can never shudder at it; and in blotting it out, and casting the very record of it away, He seals the expression of His hatred of it with His own most precious blood. The sinner, in his agony, knows that the Father comprehends perfectly the depth and darkness of his transgression; he sees that it is not love conquering righteousness in the Father, perhaps to be conquered in turn; but love working with righteousness, through righteousness, to save. There is no hiding of the heinousness of the transgression, that the reconciliation may be pleasant and facile. It is brought out into the daylight. It is placed in the very fore-front of the transaction; and God gives utterance to His condemnation of it with an emphasis which the words of a Redeemer alone can bear.

The Lord is there to redeem the sinner, not by making room for the sin in the Father's bosom, but by condemning and killing the sin in the very innermost core of the sinner's heart. He stands there before the Father, with such confession of sin on

human lips, as Divine lips alone could utter. The anguish of His last hour was the confession for man of the guilt and misery of man's transgression; the hiding of the face of the Father from the well-beloved Son was the dread Amen of God. The work of the Lamb is the assurance to the sinner that the Father, in forgiving, has dealt with the transgression in its wholeness, and in the wholeness of His own nature; that the Righteous Father is as righteous as fatherly in forgiving; that the word of the Father, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace,*" is absolute and final—is the word of the very justice and holiness of God.

The great laws of His government, the great facts of His nature, suffer no contempt, no eclipse, but receive rather a glorious illustration. The Lamb of God, in taking away the burden of my transgression, lifts it wholly. He knows it to its depths; He hates it with a hate, of which I have but caught from Him the inspiration; and He says that I am free.

"Thou know'st our bitterness, our joys are thine,
No stranger thou to all our wanderings wild,
Nor could we bear to think how every line
Of us, thy darkened likeness and defiled,

Stands in full sunshine of thy piercing eye ;
But that thou call'st us brethren. Sweet repose
Is in that word ; the Lord, who dwells on high,
Knows all, yet loves us better than He knows."

II. In the work of the Lamb of God we see the satisfaction offered which is due to the Father by consequence of sin.

There is a strong tendency to ignore this element of the work of the Incarnate Word, even on the part of those who hold firmly to the truth of the Incarnation, and who regard it as the fountain of the highest blessing which God can bestow upon mankind. From one point of view, this tendency may be regarded as a reaction, and a reaction in a healthy direction, though extreme, against the mercenary and mechanical views of the Atonement which have obscured this great portion of "the whole counsel of God." Against these views there is little need to argue in the present day. The general progress of Christian thought, in the great current of human progress, is leaving them rapidly high and dry to rot on the mud-banks whence they sprang. One hears rarely enough now the subject presented in words and forms which were frequent,

even on wise and honoured lips, some twenty years ago, and which vexed and perplexed our youth, and made the battle of belief a hard one. We are most of us agreed now that we are quite in a low and worldly region, not near the sanctuary of Christian truth, when we suffer ourselves to talk of equivalent amounts, and to balance them in estimating the atonement. So many finite deaths due as the penalty of human transgression, one infinite death sums them all, and quits the debt—is the exposition which we have often heard of the mystery of the atonement. That sum in arithmetic—bad in arithmetic as in theology—will never bring us near to the heart of the work of the Lord Jesus.

As far from the truth, perhaps, is it to believe that we have fathomed the mystery when we say, that the Lord did something for us that we might not have to do it; that the Lord suffered something for us, that we might not have to suffer it. The more we can enlarge the word substitute, until it becomes equivalent to representative, the nearer we can keep to the relation of the head of the body and the members, and their essential sympathy and co-operation, in our conception of what the Lord has

done and suffered for mankind, the nearer shall we be to the truth of the matter. I read of one who perhaps of all men best understood what the atonement meant, and what it had done for mankind, who prayed that he might be "*crucified with Christ,*" that he might know "*the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death,*" and even "*that he might fill up that which was behind of the sufferings of Christ for his body's sake, the Church.*" The Lord has not redeemed us from suffering, nor from the death which He died. He is redeeming us *by* suffering and *through* death. What He has redeemed us from is the hopeless suffering of the sinner, and the death of the soul that never dies. And from this He has delivered us by a work, one cardinal feature of which is the suffering for sin in the flesh as no mere man could suffer, and the offering for sin, as the sinner's representative, His life before the face of God. Do not say that God, as a ruler, exacts so much suffering as the penalty for sin, and that when that suffering is offered by the sinless in the sinner's behalf, God writes "cancelled" against the doom, and think that you can thus reach the bottom of the

transaction. It lies far deeper than that. But there must be some great necessity in the nature of things, as well as in the will of the Father, if we may separate them in thought, which finds utterance in the words, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." If that sentence lie in the nature of things, as well as in the will of the Father, as it must, if the Father in His Fatherly wisdom has so constituted man and the world, then we may be sure that some witness of it, some strong sense of the necessity, must lie hidden somewhere in the human heart. The necessity is there, and must be met. It is not by undoing the structure of our nature, it is not by suspending or repealing the laws of the universe, that God will save us. It is *through* the system of things in us and around us, that God will redeem us, not in defiance of it; and so the sentence stands, "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" And He who came for man, to stand for man, the essential Man in whom you and I are men, He whom the Father regarded and dealt with as Man, poured out His soul unto death, distinctly and confessedly for sin, and man died in Him. "*If one died for all,*" says the Apostle, "*then did all die.*"—(2 Cor. v. 15.) The true render-

ing of this passage brings out the representative idea in all its fulness. If the Lord died for man, you and I, as men, died in Him. When that great human heart, the heart not of a man, but of humanity, broke under the pressure, then was the penalty of man's transgression paid. All members of His body in Him offered the sacrifice; and the law—which is a reality, which expresses an eternal necessity, attaching death to sin as its inevitable penalty as well as fruit—when it lifts its accusing voice in the judgment halls of Heaven, hears the answer, “My Lord has died for sin, I died for sin, I die to sin, in Him.” Death! thou art spoiled through death. Hell! thou art vanquished through pain. He in whom I am, through death hath destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and hath broken my bonds. “O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?” The accuser is met with a fulfilled sentence; the devil is silenced by the word of a vindicated law. The sentence of death, accepted with loving submission by man's representative, and honoured to the last throb of agony, has reversed man's judgment; and by the Lamb of God, the

Father who in Him bore the burden of the sin which, for the sake of the great end, He endured within the bounds of His universe—has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. "HE IS OUR PEACE."

III. The work of the Lamb of God is the power of the Father to condemn sin in the flesh; and by His great love wherewith He hath loved us, which revealed its heights and depths on Calvary, to destroy sin for ever.

The death of the Lord Jesus was the death of man *for* sin. It was a death also *by* sin, by sinful man; the death at the hand of man of the human person of the only-begotten Son of God. Sin aims at God's supremacy. Essentially, it seems the dethronement of God, and the destruction of His kingdom; the restoration through the universe of the reign of the ancient chaos and night. In aiming at the life of Christ, it acted out its fell design. It struck, through man, at the heart of God, and man, horror-struck, recoiled. There is many a man who only sees his sin when it has come out in some dread development. It was there within; he suffered it there; he nursed it there; but when it acts out its will in

some daring, damning crime, its essential horror for the first time appears. It is on this principle that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church. The slaying of goodness and holiness, patient before the butchers, filled the world with a horror, which reacted destructively on sin. And thus the blood of THE MARTYR, the Witness of the truth, the Witness of the Father, has become the life-seed of the world. Sin's grand achievement was its own death-stroke. The blow aimed at the most Holy and Blessed One recoiled, and struck Satan to the very heart. The Lord of life and glory, the infinite Friend and Lover of the world, submitted patiently to the stroke, and, submitting, conquered. The Lord by that act, dying under the stroke of sin, made sin in its essential nature known to the world. The Father, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; He condemned it, and held it up to the hate and horror of mankind, as the murderer of truth, the murderer of righteousness, the murderer of love. And the world recoiled from it. The men who had been its most eager instruments, the murderers of the Holy and Just One, came broken-hearted to cast themselves before

His feet for pardon ; and, from that hour, the tide of evil has been ebbing from the world. The hour of the triumph of evil was the hour of its doom. The Son, the sent of the Father, condemned it in the flesh—condemned it by His life, condemned it more condignly by His death, and destroyed for ever its empire over men. He who can destroy that empire is our peace.

And estimate the force of the Divine appeals founded on that sacrifice. By that cross and passion, the Father has cast the cords of love and the bands of a man around the world. It had broken from His hand as Creator, He has bound it to His heart as Redeemer—it can never unloose itself from His love. *“Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, how that, though He was rich, for your sakes He became poor.” “I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”*

God's love in Christ is the fell antagonist of sin. Wherever the history of the cross and passion has spread, Satan has fallen from the high places of the world, and man has confessed his allegiance to his

true and only King. The heart cannot keep barred its gates, when the Man of Sorrows, the Man of Calvary, craves entrance. Hearts that had only been hardened by His judgments, melt, break, before the appeals of His woe-worn face, His thorn-scarred brow, His pierced limbs, His stricken heart. And He presents them still—He is urging the appeal on you. By His agony and bloody sweat, by His cross and passion, He is beseeching you to be reconciled to God. Refuse, it is His blood you trample upon, His agony on Calvary you scorn, His eyes you fill with tears such as rained once over doomed Jerusalem, His heart you pierce as no brutal spear could tear it, and it is His voice that, laden with unutterable tenderness, and therefore the more terrible in its hopelessness, will moan through the ages of your lost eternity, "*Oh, that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that make for thy peace, but now they are hidden from thine eyes.*"

IV.

The Holy Ghost, the Comforter.



"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever."—JOHN XIV. 16.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace."—JOHN XVI. 33.

IT was the will of the Father that in the fulness of times a Divine Person should abide continually in the world among men. From the hour when God came visibly and openly to the world (when had He not been coming invisibly?) He purposed to abide with it. He would dwell with it, nay, in it, until His hope should be realized, and it should become visibly the kingdom of Heaven.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost the Comforter, completes the manifestation of God in the Incarna-

tion. In His own person, the Word, who was with God, who was God, dwelt in the flesh. By the Spirit He still abides in the world, and dwells in you. The contemplation of the Father is the beginning of the peace of a spirit; the awakening through the Father's call of the long-dormant filial yearning—the memory of the Father's home, the pining for the Father's love. Till there is a cry in the secret chambers, "I will arise, and will go to my Father," there is no peace possible. Until there is that awakened in the human spirit which responds to the Father's call, and lifts itself to clasp the Father's out-stretched hand, it is all darkness, dreariness, and death. The Father meets the spirit with all its burdens, all its ineffaceable convictions, all its responsibilities, in the atonement. The spirit of man, yielding to the call of the Father, not first seeking or knowing, but rather sought and known of God, meets Him there. There, in the Lamb of God, the Godhead in its wholeness meets the man in his wholeness; the one way to the Father is through the Son, the Lamb of God slain on Calvary, who beareth away the sin of the world. That sacrifice is the full manifestation of the Father to

the sinner. No otherwise could *the* righteous Father meet with and treat with the fallen child. It is not only, as we have seen, that there is something to be done and something to be paid, but there is also something to be expressed—the mind of the Holy and Righteous Father about sin, and the fulness of that love which, knowing the needful sacrifice, offered the needful sacrifice and died for sin in Christ, that we might die with Him for sin and to sin, and live by Him and with Him unto God for evermore.

“The soul that sinneth, it must die.” Truly there is no cure for sin but through death. Man has sinned in the flesh; because he has sinned in the flesh, he must die in the flesh. The sinless state for the holiest of us is beyond. The death for sin Christ died. We died in Him. But we must die, too, with Him, in the flesh. “*The body is dead because of sin,*” and it must see corruption in the tomb. The new body, which shall clothe the renewed spirit, shall be free from the motions of sin which are in the flesh. The Lord, who quickens the spirit, quickens also our mortal bodies, and will bring forth a new immortal body out of the womb of the death to which sin has doomed the flesh. “*But if the*

Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

And here is the work of the Spirit. Belief in the atonement, the meeting of the Father in the sacrifice which He has Himself offered for the sin which He puts away in Christ, is the commencement of Redemption. The carrying on and the completion of the work is the office of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; from whose quickening call also the first cry, My Father, springs. He is the Divine Person who is ever with and in the world, as the life is present in a body; through whom alone humanity, that is, the great human body in which He abides and which He inspires, fulfils the higher vital functions, grows to the likeness of its great Exemplar, and realizes the Divine idea. The assurance of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is thus an essential condition of our peace.

In treating this portion of the subject I shall speak of—

I. The Divine Person—the Holy Ghost, the Comforter.

II. The nature and methods of the influence of the Spirit.

III. The office which He sustains, and the functions which he fulfils in relation to our peace.

I. The Divine Person—the Holy Ghost.

I am not called by the exigencies of my subject, nor should I feel myself competent, to enter here into any difficult considerations as to the mutual relations of the Three Persons in the Godhead. Nor do I more than touch the still more difficult question as to what the term Person, in such a connection, implies. Perhaps it has been somewhat misleading. To give it the narrow conventional meaning, to conceive of the Persons of the Godhead as persons simply in the sense in which you and I are distinct, individual, isolated persons, each of us with a will and faculties of independent, self-determining force and scope, is to fall easily into Tritheism. On the other hand, to deny to the word any fulness of meaning, to conceive simply of one Person as manifesting himself in manifold ways, and presenting manifold aspects, by a Word, and by a Spirit, is to miss the counsel of God in the method

of redemption, and to falsify the truth of His declarations concerning Himself.

He who was made flesh and dwelt among us was no God-inspired or God-possessed man, the highest only in the order of God-inspired men by whom, in all ages, God has carried on His communications with the world. He was God in person, God manifest in the flesh, "God of God, light of light, very God of very God," truly, absolutely, eternally, Divine. Knowing Him I know the Father; seeing Him I see the Father; for, as the Being who from eternity hath been "in the bosom of the Father," He hath declared the Father to the world.

I cannot read the New Testament without being sure that, as our Lord intended us to know that He was in person "God manifest in the flesh," He intended us to believe that, in the Holy Ghost the Comforter, a Divine Person would be in and with the world. His words are mere trifling with an awful subject, if He did not mean us so to understand it. If what He meant us to believe was simply, that when He left the world He would leave His Spirit behind Him—the spirit of His truth, the spirit of His life—to carry on His

work, as the great ones of the world leave a spirit behind them, and, being dead, by that spirit speak and work through ages ; then, if that were all He meant, His words would be an awful delusion, mockery, and snare. I use the terms unhesitatingly. If the words mean no more than I have described, words could not have been devised more artfully to entrap men into the belief that a Divine Person, the Holy Ghost the Comforter, would in person enter into and abide with men. All that helps us to believe that, in the person of our Lord, God was manifest in the flesh, is said to help us to believe that, in the person of the Holy Ghost, God still abides in, toils for, and suffers with the world. There is One in whom, not something of God, but God Himself, is present, in all the fulness of His being and power, with you, with me, and with mankind. The world did not lose the presence of a Divine Person when the Lord left it to go unto the Father ; rather, it has gained a presence of God more real, more vital, more abiding, than it was possible for it to realise before the Saviour was taken up from it into Heaven.

There is much here which we cannot fathom ;

much to which what we see and know in man, furnishes only faint and difficult clues; but there is something also which comes out of the mystery, and is expressed with unqualified clearness, something which we see, and are intended to see, as distinctly as we see the God-manhood in the Saviour; even the Divine Person, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, descending from the Father and the Son, entering into and abiding with the world. I use the word world throughout in no technical, theological sense. I use it to describe the whole human sphere of the Spirit's work; that which it is said "God so loved," as to give His Son for it, and in which (John xvi. 8—11) the Spirit is said to carry on His convincing work, surely not to condemn, but to save.

Let us listen to the solemn testimony of the Lord.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever—even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."—(John xvi. 15—18.)

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send

unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of me. And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”—(John xv. 26, 27.)

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and show it unto you.”—(John xvi. 7—15.)

How profoundly the apostles had received and rested on the assurance, how distinctly they conceived of Him as a Divine Person, as they conceived

of the Lord as a Divine Person, every page of their writings might be quoted to show.

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why has thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost; and great fear came on all them that heard these things.”—(Acts v. 1—5.)

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.”—(Acts xiii. 2—4.)

How distinctly it represented itself to Paul, that a Divine Person, the Holy Ghost, was present in

the world to be "God with us," let these brief passages prove :—" *Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities ; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought ; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints, according to the will of God.*"—(Rom. viii. 26, 27.)

" *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit ; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him ? Even so, the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*"—(1 Cor. ii. 9—13.) Take, again, the formula of baptism, and the apostolic benediction :—

" *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All*

power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”—(Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.)
“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.”—(1 Cor. xiii. 14.)

To me, the thought is infinitely precious. The world would have been “orphaned,” had the Lord left it, and left simply the spirit of His word, His work, His life, to occupy His room. The burden of life is such, that “God with us,” alone can sustain its pressure. Rob us of that belief, that God is with us, is in us, and you rob us of that legacy which the Lord died in shame and anguish to bequeath—the Divine Person, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who, entering into willing, loving hearts abideth therein for ever. “Temples of God, through the Holy Ghost.”

II. The nature and methods of the influence of the Spirit.

Again, here is an essential mystery, which, to the

pure intellect, is unfathomable, but which experience helps us to grasp as a reality, and partially to comprehend.

How spirit acts on spirit, defies analysis. How a will is acted on by a will, none of us can understand. That a will may retain its freedom, and yet be powerfully moved by another will, we know by our own experience and our observation of mankind. We talk of men being possessed by an idea, or by the influence of another man. We never dream, save in fiction, of releasing the patient from the responsibility of self-direction; our laws force on him the responsibilities of his action, even though it be to the issue of life or of death. The law recognizes no absolute paralysis of freedom, because the thing is not. Will may work on will with fearful power; an orator may stir and sway the passions of a vast multitude, till he lashes them to frenzy; he may lead them forth, the captives of his eloquent tongue and passionate soul, to extremities of suffering, or to fight for a hopeless cause, even unto death. But they move in freedom, they fight in freedom, they die in freedom; and with God is both their and their betrayer's account. The influence of a parent of

strong character and constant persistence in effort on a child's nature may be overwhelming. But, in the strict sense, it is not absolute; it is spirit acting on spirit; the spirit acted upon retains its freedom, and not seldom proves it at the last moment—breaking, by one daring stroke, from the master's hand.

There is a spirit in the very words of a Plato, a Bacon, which sways the thoughts, aye, and moulds the lives of men for ages; being dead, by that spirit they still speak, and work mightily in the world.

Each spirit is a creator—a parent, rather—after the law of the higher influence, the law which reigns in the sphere of free thought, will, and love. There is no one living who is not daily begetting states of thought and will in those who surround him, and who is not a factor in the sum of the influences which make some other man's life. And among us, as even Seneca had the wisdom to see, “a Divine spirit abides,” working as a spirit on spirits, as a free spirit on free spirits, in harmony with the laws and institutes of the sphere of a spirit's freedom, and yet with an energy of which all other spiritual forces and operations are but the far-off reflections, and

to an end which will realize the hope, the idea of God.

We dare not materialize the Spirit's work with the high Calvinists, and make it a creation of mere absolute power, like the material universe around us. "*He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast,*" stands equally in such a creed for the constitution of either world. When we open the records of the Spirit's agency among men, we come into a new and transcendent region. "He speaks, and it is not done; He commands, and it does not stand fast," we are tempted to say, at first sight, is the law in this higher world. The mere marking of a settled number, as the elect stones of the temple of the new creation, and building them in, in spite of even their struggles and rebellions, is nothing like the picture of the way of the Spirit in the new creation, which is presented in the word of God. We have not to read far in that word before we come to the record of the frustration of God's benignant purposes by man's rebellion. Indeed, the history of the whole Old Testament era is summed up by an inspired summarist in these words:—"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist

the Holy Ghost : as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted ? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One ; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers : who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it." We meet with these exhortations in St. Paul:—" *And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*" "*Quench not the Spirit.*" We read the record of the sorrowful resignation of a fruitless struggle in the words, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*" "*And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*"

These are words to make us tremble. They reveal to us, that not even in our relations to the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is our freedom overborne. The God who made us free, respects our

freedom, and will have us to be free subjects of the heavenly kingdom, through the comfort of the Holy Ghost.

And the comfort lies in the thought that it is the living God who is with us, not only in the might of His omnipotent hand, but in the power of the relation which, as the Author of our being, He sustains to it, and the access which in right of that relation He claims and enjoys. He who made us, and in whose image we are made, knows us ; He can find and touch our innermost springs. Nothing within us is hidden from His eye—nothing can bury itself beyond the touch of His hand. There is a sanctuary which no human spirit can enter, but which He can enter, and wherein He can dwell. There, where we know sadly that the closest, tenderest friend is powerless to touch us, we know that He can touch and work on us. In the centre of centres, the core of cores, of our being, where all human fellowship fails us, we can find, we have found, Him, the Lord. And there is an infinitely complete and profound correspondence between our spirits and the God who made us, and embreathed into our nostrils the breath of life. He can touch

us, move us, and master us, for we were made to be moved and mastered by Him. There is not a faculty of our being, not a nerve, fibre, or pulse, which does not secretly own Him. It was made for Him. It may drag on without Him what may be called an existence. A plant may exist in the darkness ; but when it comes out into the sunlight, every pore opens its portal, the whole plant is alive with joy. The Spirit has this special power over us, in that we are His ; and if the will in the mind chooses to forget it, the faculties of that mind do not forget it. They pine for God as for their sunlight. The Spirit meets them at every point ; He has the supply of their every want, the help for their every need. There is not a word which He can speak which does not find somewhere within a responsive echo. There is not a touch which does not heal some wound, or soothe some pain. We need Him, we die without Him. The self-will within us may rebel against the necessity, as the prodigal battled long with the hunger, before the pride was tamed ; but it is there, and is the source of His mighty power over souls.

Our peace, in the contemplation of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, lies in the compass of the

forces which He can bring to bear upon the spirit. Receive Him, and He is omnipotent to save.

III. The office which the Comforter sustains, and the functions which he fulfils in relation to our peace.

I. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter—the Paraclete—what does it mean? The precise meaning to be attached to this remarkable word is a point much debated among theologians. Literally, it is “one called to the side of another,” to sustain weakness by superior strength, to enlighten folly by superior wisdom, to renovate decay by superior life. The word advocate exactly expresses it; but the term with us has unfortunately a technical meaning, which confuses our thought. In our modern usage, the Advocate is the man who is to *speak* for us. The Paraclete is the being who is to *act* for us; to comfort us in the old sense of the word, making us strong by his alliance. Comforter is a nobler, larger word than Advocate, if we can detach ourselves from the modern meaning, which is simply cheering and soothing in sorrow. The old word meant much more. The root-idea is strength; to make strong by fellowship is the original idea of comfort; to

stand by the side of a sufferer and say, "There, rely on me: nothing shall tempt me to leave your side. I am with you even unto death." That is comfort; and of this strain is the comfort of the Holy Ghost. "*Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*"

I cling to the word Comforter in the large old sense of the term, as the full rendering of Paraclete; and to me it is deeply suggestive. The true comforter is always the man that can strengthen us. There are two possible ways of helping the weary and heavy laden. You may lift part of the burden for them, and leave what is more within the measure of their strength; or you may strengthen them to lift it all, and even to bear it with a cheerfulness, a joyfulness, which the unburdened never know. That is comfort; and that is the Spirit's work. The true idea is suggested in the passage—"There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him."—(Luke xxii. 43.) Strengthening Him, not surely by bearing His burden, but by cheering Him to endure. There is no limit to endurance if the spirit be kindled, and embreathe its courage and strength into the organs. Inspire a man, and you comfort Him effectually.

To get leave to shirk the burden is a slave's comfort ; a freeman's, a son's, is to get strength to bear it manfully, and to find in bearing it the fellowship of God.

2. The first and most fundamental element of the peace of a spirit in the assurance of the communion of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, lies in His mission to develop the filial spirit in the believing soul. *"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear : but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."* I return to the old position. To know the Father is to be at peace. The Spirit of God in us is the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Father, Father," and enter into the peace of God. The main, grand aim of the mission of the Comforter is to make us the sons of God. Realise sonship, and devil may rage or world may woo, the peace abides unbroken, a peace which passeth all understanding, a joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. It is a hard truth

to receive—the absolute Fatherhood of God. “It cannot be,” we say, “we are all unworthy, children of the devil rather than of God. The thought is too awful: we cannot lift ourselves to its height.” Is there no comfort, no peace, in the thought that there is a Divine Person in the midst of us, within us, whose office it is to lift us to this height, and to embolden us to cry ‘Father,’ with filial hope and joy—to make the incredible credible, the dream real? It seems far off from us—this power to cry, as an infant to a mother, to the Lord of all. It is just this infantile trust which the Spirit awakens, and nurses to hearty confidence and assured hope. If the filial spirit be our peace, the being able to rest the burden of our care on God, with the quiet confidence that it will be borne, the sense that we have a right to rest it there, then surely the knowledge that there is a Divine Spirit with us, within us, whose express mission it is to draw us to the Father, must bring us peace. Remember that the only salvation for the prodigal was to be received as a son at home again. The spirit which drew him homewards choked the words, “*Let me be as one of thy hired servants,*” as they rose to his lips. “Let me be a

son, or I perish," is the cry of those in whom the Spirit of adoption is working. Far off as God seems from the wanderer, too far for thought to travel, the Spirit can make the Fatherhood the most vivid, vital reality within the scope of the soul's consciousness; and can fill it with a trust and hope in that one word, which places the world and sin and hell for ever beneath its feet. As the filial heart learns to cry out for God, and to catch the responses, its peace becomes broad and calm as the current of a deep river, which the breezes of care and sorrow but ruffle for a moment as they sweep by. *"Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God."*

3. It is the mission of the Spirit to lead us into the knowledge of the Fatherly counsel of God. *"He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us."* *"All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and show it unto you."* It was the office of the Spirit by the Pentecostal baptism to make known to the disciples the things of God; the love of God, the thoughts of God, the gift of God, the purpose of God for the

world. The morning of Pentecost was as the transition from dim twilight to mid-day. The disciples leapt at once to the knowledge of all which had been given to them of God in Christ. His life, His sorrows, His death, became glorious. Where were the tears with which they had bathed the corpse of the Redeemer, the hopeless sorrow with which they had hallowed His grave? Scattered like the morning mists of the valley before the splendour of the burning moon. Compare the weary, heart-broken journey to Emmaus—“*And He said unto them, What things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done,*”—with the clear, grand, firm exposition of the meaning of Gethsemane and Calvary: “*The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our Fathers, hath glorified His Son Jesus: whom ye delivered up, and denied Him in the presence of Pilate,*

when he was determined to let Him go. But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses. And His name through faith in His name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before hath showed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled." See how, through the Spirit, they leapt, as it were, in a moment, to the understanding of the Divine counsels, and saw the purpose of the Father's love in Christ, behind them, beneath them, around them on every hand; upbearing them, too, against an opposing world, an opposing universe; for God's eternal purpose who should frustrate, what hand should disannul His absolute decrees? And we have the same rest in the Lord. The Spirit taketh of the things of Christ and showeth them to our spirits. Foremost, the eternal counsel of His love. We see the glorious thought and purpose of

redemption stretching on from eternity to eternity; we see how the whole universe has been moulded with a view to its accomplishment; we hear the groaning of the travail of creation, and we catch the gleam of the hope which God hath lit in every creature's heart; we see what universal interests are enwoven inextricably with the purpose of our salvation, what hope will be frustrated, what love will be robbed of its object, what sorrow of the Incarnate Word will become a wanton waste, if God's purpose and hope of our redemption fail. And as the Spirit taketh these things of the Father and showeth them to our spirits, we clasp the comfort, the strength, of God's sharing of our hope, which utters itself in the triumphant words, *"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the*

love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

4. By the Spirit, the Lord continues to share by sympathy the sorrow, struggle, and suffering of the world.

It is not the tale of a far-off conflict, a victory won in bygone ages and complete for ever, that is our message of peace. That were a gladder message to the men of old time than to us. One who has done with the battle, who is far from the sorrow, who, having won the victory, sits on high serenely on His throne, is not the Saviour to stir our deeper passions, and to give us peace by the comfort of His fellowship, His courage, and His love. No! if He is to be our Elder Brother, our Captain of salva-

tion, our conflict of to-day must be something real to Him, not in the light of a past achievement, but in the light of a present interest and hope. We need a Captain, not who *has been*, but who *is* with us in the battle, who *is* fighting for us and before us in the field; who *is* bending Himself under the pressure of the burden which well nigh crushes us, and *is* sharing all our tears, and fears, and pains. And by the Spirit, the Lord is present—present in the flesh, bearing, pleading, striving, sorrowing, weeping, as when once His weary footsteps trod the pathways of the world. Each generation He thus renews His incarnation; by and in the Spirit He dwells with men. The battle which they fight against sin is His battle; the Spirit arms the combatants, He nerves and inspires, them, He joys in their victories, and sorrows over their defeats; He sees His own hope fail for the moment when world or devil win the advantage; He sees His own hope blossom and ripen as each brave soldier strikes the triumphant stroke, and is taken up with the victors into the joy of his Lord. The Spirit comforts us by standing with us, by us, in us, in the field. He prolongs the life-work of

the Saviour and renews for each age His brotherhood with sorrow, His acquaintance with the grief and burden of the world. The agony of the Saviour is over, is over for ever. "*By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*" But His tender, sympathetic heart still goes forth with each combatant and sufferer; He tastes Himself the cup which He lifts to the submissive lips. Through the Spirit we know that He is a Saviour at hand, and not afar off; and that through all our conflict and all our discipline He is fighting as well as sympathising at our side. He has not left us orphans; He has come to us. To you, to me, to every human spirit, He is what He was to the men who shared the sorrows of His pilgrimage—EMMANUEL, GOD WITH US.

5. "The Spirit likewise helpeth our infirmities."

i. By bringing to us, and keeping ever in our sight, the things of the spiritual and eternal world.

There is One ever with us who is from Heaven, who bears witness of Heaven, and who will not suffer Heaven to pass away from our sight. There is an upbearing of our spirits which cannot be described, but which I earnestly hope that all my

readers know, which makes the earthly things which fascinate the flesh seem strangely poor and small, and which lets in upon earth, as it were, the sunlight of the higher world. We seem set, for the time, in a higher key of thought and feeling. We do not ask, then, "*What shall it profit me if I serve the Lord?*" we know that that service is the one service; that it alone gives freedom and joy to a spirit; that it is life, while all other service is death. A kind of disgust and weariness of the things which daily captivate us, and the ends which we so eagerly pursue, steals over us. It is beggarly work, we say, this life which we are living; there is something far nobler than this within our reach. We cannot be always grovelling; our souls were made to climb, to breathe the holy, heavenly atmosphere, to taste Divine, eternal joys. Then we bethink ourselves of our Father's house, and cry again for the bread of His home, and His love. It is not that we are shown at such moment the vanity of particular pursuits and objects; *that* we learn from experience, the learning that is the discipline of life; it is rather that the soul is lifted into a region in which it realizes its true vocation, and knows that

it is of heavenly birth. The things which, in its common modes, fill large spaces in its field of vision, are dwarfed, till they seem poor and bare. And when it sees the Divine life unfolded before it, when it has a vision of its glories and a foretaste of its joys, the toils, the struggles, the sacrifice, the cross-bearing seem light; nay, they have even a solemn, attractive beauty; "This is the life," it cries, "that I would live alway. Help me! help me! O my God!"

ii. By making intercession within us with groanings which cannot be uttered. "*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*" The Lord maketh intercession for us there; the Spirit here, within. What is the principle of this intercession, and what its fruits? It rests on this, that the desire, the want, of a child, even if it find no utterance in words—nay, the more if it find no utterance in words—is a prayer to a Father's heart.

Remember the fundamental principle on which our redemption rests. "*The Father Himself loveth us.*" "*God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son that the world through Him might not perish.*" To a being who loves, the mute desire of the beloved is more a prayer than the most pronounced wishes of a stranger. The knowledge that there is there a want unsatisfied, is a grief and sorrow to the loving, fatherly heart. But God, who is rich in mercy, in whom all fulness dwells, waits only the development of the want to satisfy it. The Spirit's office is to awaken and enlarge the deeper wants of the spirit; to make in the soul a great need, a great void, which God alone can fill. To rouse within it a longing for a good which no creature can respond to; which can be met alone by Him who begat it, that He might bestow Himself as an eternal portion on His child. There is in all in whom the Spirit is indwelling—and it is a sign of His indwelling—deep down in the nature, a pining for something which cannot shape itself into a petition, a groaning under the burden of the flesh and the world which cannot frame itself into a complaint. It lies under all our daily

acts and expressions. They may be far away from the true occupation of our hearts. How little our fellow-men, even the nearest, know us. Our words may be light and trivial, or sharp and bitter, while our spirit is groaning in secret, weeping over their sins, or sighing for new freedom and life. God knows us. He sees those silent tears, He hears those secret groans, and before Him they make our future. There, deep down in the unutterable, is the true laboratory of the life ; and there, "*The Spirit maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be expressed.*" There He is stirring and shaping us, there He is enlarging and enriching us, for all growth here is by travail ; and there He is sowing the harvest of eternity. The aspirations of life, breathed out to no ear but God's, if we give them full wing, are the possession of Heaven ; the lusts of life, if we give them full swing, become the torments of hell. And there in the depths, kindling the aspirations and crushing the lusts, is the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, by whom we are sealed unto the day of redemption.

6. The Spirit is in us as the earnest of eternal glory.

The Spirit is ever spoken of as an earnest. His work is to awaken aspiration and longing. The end of His indwelling is beyond. He is the Holy Spirit of promise, not because He was promised, only or chiefly, but because He is a promise. He dwells in us as the gift of the Saviour; His office is to reveal the Lord in us—"Christ in us the hope of glory." He takes the finished work, the present glory, of the Saviour, and shows them as the pattern of our own. He could not be given till the Saviour was glorified. The Spirit works by the Word: His power is according to the things which He can take and show unto the soul. The love of God, the glory of Christ, are the substance of His revelations. Till they were declared in very deed, He could not show them; when the Lord, having revealed the Father, passed through death to glory, all the fulness of the Spirit's quickening power burst like a flood upon the world. And in witnessing of Christ, He is inevitably witnessing of a future. "*Our life is hid with Christ in God, and when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.*" The more fully the Spirit makes us conscious of partaking that life, the more profoundly does He prophesy of

Heaven. The more fully He abides in us, the more do our spirits pine for the Father's home, the Father's presence, and the sunlight of the Father's love ; the more do we long and pant for the day when we shall lay down the burden, and be at rest with God.

“ For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven : if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened : not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.”

The groanings which He stirs are the groans of our travail, the new-born struggling out into its native world. He witnesses of that world. He gives us the right to strain towards it, and in vision, at any rate, to make it our own.

Jerusalem, the glorious,
The joy of the elect,
O ! dear and future vision,
That eager hearts expect ;

E'en now by faith I see thee,
E'en now thy walls discern,
To thee my thoughts are kindled,
And strive, and pant, and yearn.

And, now, we fight the battle,
And, then, we wear the crown,
Of full, and everlasting,
And passionless renown.
O land that seest no sorrow !
O state that know'st no strife !
O princely bowers ! O land of flowers !
O realm and home of life !

And with whom, in whom, is the Spirit ? Who has the right to all the comfort, the peace, which the assurance of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost affords ? “ *He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.* ” “ *Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ?* ” I know not on what ground any who feel the desires of the higher life stirring within them, should feel themselves excluded from the comfort of these words. Nay, He is with those who are striving against Him ; in whom His work is a striving against their lusts. He is there within, almighty to deliver. No soul goes down into perdition without having resisted and quenched the Spirit. He is there, witnessing,

pleading, striving. His being there means all, promises all, yea, infinitely more than all, that I have described. Lend Him your will: it is all He asks for; and enter into full possession of the comfort of the Holy Ghost. "THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT IN ME YE MIGHT HAVE PEACE."



V.

The Conqueror of the World.



"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world."—

JOHN XVI. 33.

THERE are two sides to the vital question—the way of the salvation of the soul. Viewed from the Divine side, it is the fruit of the love of the Father, through the work of the Son, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Its root is in God's purpose, its development is by God's power, its fruit is the complete unfolding of God's thought—the Divine idea realized in man. It is of God, and to God. God begets it, God developes it, God completes it ; and God will present it perfect before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy, in eternity.

And the soul, looking at it from this side, has simply to receive it. "*Stand still, and see the salvation of God,*" is God's word to it. Rest in the Lord, believe in the Saviour, receive the Spirit ; cease from works, cease from struggle, fall on the bosom of the Divine love—rest, and be saved.

Looked at from the other side, it is all action and enterprise. A captive has to burst his bonds, a soldier has to arm for the battle, a runner has to train for the race, an athlete has to wrestle for the prize. Force has to be met by force ; a spoiler has to be beaten from his prey ; a usurper has to be dashed from his throne ; a bold, subtle, indefatigable enemy has to be defied and fronted ; a path of peril, with depths on either hand, has to be trodden, with firm foot and steady brain ; a crown of life has to be wrested from the hand of Death. There are words of saintly-inspired men which stir us like a trumpet-call, which rudely start the Quietists from their assured repose. The kingdom of Heaven is for the strong hands that can take it. Arm—arm ! To the field, where the foe is entrenched ! to the midst of the throng, where the battle is fiercest ! there quit you like men, young soldiers, there plant your vic-

torious foot; for to him, and to him only, that overcometh, will the Lord give to sit with Him on His throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with the Father in His throne.

Life is pictured as a long, stern battle. The Bible is full of battle-marches; of wails of defeat, or pæans of victory. It breathes the spirit of intense effort and conflict. It is the word of men whose souls were strained to the utmost tension to do and to dare for God and their salvation; men whose eternal destiny rested on their endeavours, and who knew that if they relaxed one moment their effort and vigilance, they would find the devil near and the Lord afar; who comprehended perfectly, that while they helped themselves they would find the Lord helping them effectually, while, if they proved traitors to themselves and Him, they had nothing between them and death. It would be easy to construct such a theory of the Christian life, out of very definite, very prominent, very inspiring, passages of the word of God. "Fight the fight;" "run the race;" "lift the burden;" if you would win the prize. *"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every*

weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

It is a wholesome and inspiring vision of the Christian life; but if this were all, alas, for us! alas, for the world! If God simply met our advances, prospered our work, crowned our achievement, we might drop sword and shield at the outset, and yield ourselves captives to our inevitable foe. But, blessed be God, this is not the Gospel. There is the battle, the race, the burden; and it is we who must fight, run, and bear. No man can quell our foes, or run our race, or lift our load. If we decline the conflict, or relax the strain, another must take our crown. No statement of this necessity can be too absolute, no exhibition of it too prompt and stern. "*Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling;*" "*gird unto you the whole armour of God,*" and fight. But the peace of God comes to us, through the words which tell of a world already conquered by the great Captain of salvation ; a devil

already beaten, and driven from the field. His voice streams down on us serenely from the height of Heaven, through all the dust and clamour of the war. *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world.”*

There is no escape for a soul in earnest, upon any system of doctrine, from the care and the burden of its future destiny. Doubt must rest somewhere, and does rest. To stand still, and see the salvation of God, is the whole spiritual life of only the most presumptuous, and arrogant ; and is mostly found in concert with lawless liberty, and even sanctimonious lust. We all feel, or ought to feel, that the seeing God's salvation is the condition of our own vigorous effort and constant toil ; and that, in seeing His salvation, we find our own course marked out, and our battle arrayed. The winning the crown seems to stand in our own effort and constancy ; our courage, conduct, and endurance in the field. We dare not unarm for a moment, or relax the strain. We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, because we know that our salvation is of God, and that He is the living God who is working

in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. We may hold what views we will of effectually calling and final perseverance, we do not kill the wholesome doubt thereby. We may sing, with the higher school of doctrinarians,

“We are a garden walled around,
Chosen and made peculiar ground;”

Or with the lower,

“Ah, Lord! with trembling I confess,
A gracious soul may fall from grace.”

But the high Calvinist does not get rid of his care about the soul's salvation by resting on the decrees. Granted, that the soul joined to Christ can never be severed from Him; “Am I joined to Christ?” becomes the one absorbing question. The soul is ever looking into its evidences. And just in proportion to the strength of its conviction that the soul one with Christ is one with Him absolutely for ever, is the hesitancy of the conscience to take home the high assurance as indefeasibly and eternally its own. I venture to ask those who entertain strong Calvinistic assurances on these high matters, whether they have not known seasons of terrible mental anguish, and even despair? I find it in the lives

of all the eminent saints of this school, that they have had to pass through a horror of great darkness. Just in proportion to the grandeur of the assurance aimed at in their system, is the fear of a sensitive and high-minded nature, lest it should be taken home without warrant and lodged too easily in the heart.

On the other hand, the advocates of lower views of grace are full of a busy and even bustling earnestness about the progress of the Divine life within. They are always comparing notes of experiences, and measuring signs of progress; full of perpetual dread, lest after all they should be cast away. I have no call here to measure the work of the two systems. I only say there is the anxious doubt, the black care, in both of them, which is perhaps best mastered, or rather kept within due bounds, neither by searching into evidences nor measuring experiences, but by looking out and up to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and realising the full force of His inspiring words, "*Be of good courage; I have overcome the world.*"

In considering this more fully, I shall ask—

I. What is the assurance conveyed in these words, "*I have overcome the world?*"

II. Why should we, therefore, "*Be of good cheer?*"
What is its relation to our peace?

I. What is the assurance which is conveyed in the words, "*I have overcome the world?*"

1. The Lord has given us proof that to be in the world, and not of the world, is possible for man.

The temptation of man is dire. The pressure is hard. Did God *speak* to man only of resistance and conquest, man, overborne by the weight of the malignant influences, by which he is everywhere surrounded, might say in the bitterness of his soul to his Maker, "Why hast thou made me [thus? Thou hast placed me where sin is easy, and holiness is hard. I find it simply impossible. The tempter has every advantage through the world and the flesh, while I—where are my springs? My strength, thou hast thyself told me, is perfect weakness. '*It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.*' Why hast thou made me thus, or suffered me to inherit this?" God's answer is, the life of the man Christ Jesus, and His assuring word, "*Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world.*" Looking away from Christ, we might well agonize over the question, Is there any victory over the world for

man? The splendid picture of the 8th Psalm, out of Christ, seems to be a fiction or a dream. "*But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him; or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.*" But looking unto Jesus, the Man who overcame the world, light breaks in upon us; victory is possible; and we have no right to complain of the Lord for having placed us within such easy reach of the foe. The captain who leads his soldiers to certain destruction is responsible as their betrayer; but the captain who can lead them even through deadly peril to victory, they honour with crowns. It is this victory which is the blessed fact in the life of the Lord Jesus—He has overcome the world. A man "tempted in all points, like as we are," and who could "suffer being tempted," has lived sinless, and has put the world underneath His feet.

2. He has conquered the temptation of the world.

“ Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to Him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But He answered and said, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh Him up into the holy city, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down : for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee : and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan : for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth Him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto Him.” He proved there that a life built on

the rock of the truth of God can bid the devil calm defiance; that there is absolutely no overmastering force in all the temptations with which man can be called upon to struggle, if the soul keeps steadfast to the allegiance which it owes to God, and to the light of truth in His word. They were all there—the grosser temptations and the more subtle. The clamour of appetite, aching for indulgence; the subtle temptation of the high-wrought mind and heart by the vision of empire—a swift leap by one wrongdoing to a coveted prize. Which of us is not beset by them? Which of us does not know the pining hunger of appetite and lust for forbidden pleasures? Is there a day on which the devil is not urging on us the thought that there is a swifter path to our kingdom than by calmly working and waiting according to the will of God? Our kingdom is our end in life, whatever that end may be. To the Lord, these temptations were present more vividly than they can ever present themselves to you. He “suffered being tempted.” Consider what *His* suffering must mean. But the temptation never entered the sanctuary of His spirit; it was barred absolutely by the word of God. Out of that word, which, too, is

in your hands, He met, answered, and conquered the tempter, and proved, absolutely and for ever, that there is no form of temptation which can have a shadow of power over a human spirit, if the "thus saith the Lord" is established firmly as the rule, the law, within.

3. He overcame the spirit of the world.

He brought the spirit of the heavenly world into its presence, and the spirit of this world quailed. *"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place; for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples. Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them. As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground."* This is symbolic. He overcame the world by living in it a

heavenly life, and rebuking it by the contrast. The world was ashamed, afraid, undone. His life condemned it. It had no power to meet His eye, to face His word. Wherever He met it, He calmly conquered it—inevitably, as sunlight conquers darkness, or spring the deadness and coldness of the ground. Follow Him through life. Everywhere you discern the calm assurance that the world had nothing which could withstand or gainsay Him. None speaking in the name of the world, or by the spirit of the world, could silence Him, or trouble for a moment the calm certainty of His word. He spake as one who had all Heaven, who had the Father, with Him to affirm it. He had nothing to change, nothing to qualify, let the world rage or lie as it pleased. He had one thing to do, to bear witness to the truth; that truth ever put the rage to silence, the lie to shame. For very shame men were fain to be silent before His witness. Falsehood, selfishness, have not a word of defence when truth and love look them in the face and look them down. So the Lord looked down the spirit of the world, which till then held lordly mastery, and had dealt with human hearts and spirits as its slaves. It could

not meet Him ; it could not face Him, as He stood there alone, unarmed, in its midst, by the spirit of the Father to speak His truth. It trembled, faltered, cowered, before the spirit of the Saviour. The spell was broken. He overcame the spirit of the world, and wrought the great deliverance for man.

4. He overcame the judgment of the world. Condemned by its tribunals, He suffered all it could inflict of suffering and shame, and, suffering, overcame. All that the world could do by its terrors to rivet its yoke, He endured, and broke the spell. There is no terror in any suffering which a man is willing to undergo. The pain to which a man is dragged hath torment, but pain had none for Him. He was not forced, an unwilling victim, to the judgment-hall and Golgotha. The world gave its sentence, He calmly accepted it. He laid down the life which it had demanded under the conditions which it demanded, and took it again at the hand of the Father, under conditions which the world could not touch through eternity. It asked His life as its last effort at conquest, the last blow which it could strike at His unfaltering soul ; He gave it,

He laid down His life, and proved the world's ultimatum to be worse than powerless; He came out of its Golgotha immortal; the very body on which it wreaked its vengeance He bore up transfigured, glorified, to a heavenly throne. In view of His death He declared, "*Now is the Prince of this world cast out.*" He saw that the last blow would but reveal His essential power and its essential weakness. He was already on the path to the Roman bar of judgment and the anguish of Calvary when He said to them, "*Be of good courage; I have overcome the world.*"

II. Why should we be therefore of good courage? How stands this victory related to our peace?

1. The spirit by which He overcame the world is with us, is in us, that we, too, may overcome.

I have spoken of the indwelling of the Divine Person, the Holy Ghost the Comforter. By Him another world, "which is not of this building," is revealed within us and around us, and the world that now is, by its pure revelation, by its simple force, is overcome. That by which the Lord overcame is with us, is in us. What were riches, honour, power, praise, to Paul, to Peter, inspired

by the Holy Ghost. Had the devil come to them and shown to them all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said, "*All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me,*" what had been their prompt, emphatic answer? "*Get thee behind me, Satan; thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.*" What were the worlds of sense, in all their glory, to the men who knew the Lord that made them, who were His familiar friends, His brethren, destined to dwell with Him in the house where the heavenly things of which this world is but a "pattern," would be their possession and joy through eternity? Perhaps they might feel that they *had* the glory of the world, the worlds, as Satan never could give it; that the friends, the brethren, of Christ might say with a truth which Satan could but falsely mimic, "*All things are ours.*" "*The world, life, death, things present, things to come, all are ours,*" would have a meaning for them which Satan never dreams of. It is the Lord's world, already ours, which we are selling for the devil's, when we listen to the tempter. But a vision of the Lord's world, of what is ours in Christ, strips the gaud of all its tinsel. Like the

chamber of the last night's orgy, with the light of Heaven let in upon it, is the world, when the light of the Lord has once been seen, and the purities of the sphere, from which He came, to which He passed, in which He lived even while they were howling their imprecations around Him, have once been tasted by the soul. Remember that He overcame the world by bringing into it what He has left in it as an inheritance, the revelation of the kingdom of Heaven. It is not easy to describe, but those who may read these words who know well what it means—what an utter eclipse this world suffers when He has been seen, and His love has been tasted by the soul.

It is very powerful, very terrible, the world's pressure of temptation, while you feel that you belong to it; as a man suffers in a night-mare agonies and horrors, while he believes them real. But when Christ is seen, and the great Heaven which surrounds Him, just "as a dream when one awaketh," all the terror of this world passeth away. It is hard to overrate the battle which the apostles had to fight, the battle which you have to fight day by day, in resisting your world, in making light of

its temptations, and despising its threats. I only say to you, get a vision of Jesus and His world, and the conquest becomes as easy as for an angel to pass by a wanton's beauty, or a child to make light of gold. Hard as it is to renounce it, impossible even for those who feel it to be their world, one gush of Heaven's light upon it makes it as utterly bare of interest and beauty as the memory of a satiated appetite, or some pleasure of this life for which you were madly eager, when crossed by the tidings of the mortal sickness of a beloved friend. Have you never seen the glory stripped off the most splendid prosperity in a moment, when a tiny hand, dearer to you than worlds, has been locked in convulsions, or when the death-dew has settled on what will soon be a young angel's brow? "Ah, my God! take the world, but leave me that!" So the knowledge of Christ, "whom having not seen, we love, and in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," quite easily strips the world of every shred of its splendour, touches with palsy every nerve of its power, discrowns and expels its king.

2. The Lord's overcoming the world is full of

vital comfort to our spirits, because His victory as our representative, our leader, our head, at once transfers our citizenship to the world which He revealed, and in which He reigns.

Your citizenship *is* in Heaven. Not shall be in Heaven, but *is*, in virtue of that victory of your Lord. He has won your freedom, and has proclaimed it. The world's chain is off you, the world's claim on your allegiance is disowned and cast out. The question is not, *can* you be a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, can you hold high fellowship with the angels, and move in the rhythm of the motion of the world of spirits; you *are* a citizen already, Christ, your King, has come to you from Heaven, and has made you its citizen. The real question is, can you, having your citizenship in Heaven, turn again to the beggarly elements from which He has set you free? The truth which the angels know He has made known to you, perhaps as they can never know it. There are things which you know, into which the angels desire to look. The motives which animate them, the objects which inflame their ardour, the spirit which inspires their zeal, are all before you and within you. The Lord's

overcoming of the world has been the lifting of the curtain of sense around you; the whole universe is now in sight. Life and immortality are now no more dim thoughts, haunting the verge of the invisible, they are brought out into light by the Gospel. The sunlight of God shines over all the scene of your travail and conflict: your daily marches are lit by the lustre, whose fountain is the light ineffable, that streams from the throne of God and of the Lamb. If Heaven can do anything to make the conquest of earth an easy victory, Heaven is yours. If the spirit within you has heard the call, "My Son," has uttered the joyful response, "My Father—my Father!" has set its face homeward with the cry, "Make me glad, O my Father, with the light of Thy countenance;" "guide me on earth by thy counsel, and afterward receive me to thy glory,"—there is infinite solace in the thought that the world from which you are struggling to extricate your spirit, imposing as it seems, has been beaten and struck to the dust by your Saviour, and that all Heaven's forces, all Heaven's influences, are around and within you, to strengthen you to win the same everlasting victory.

3. Have peace in the contemplation of the solemn, the awful force of the sanctions, the seals, which Christ has attached to His promises—to His great promise, wherein stands our hope, that He will perfect that which concerneth us, and present us perfect before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Joy—His joy, as well as yours. The fruit of the travail of His spirit, the harvest of His tears and pain, are all garnered up in you. There, in the depths of your being, He has stored them; losing you, He loses them for ever; saving you with everlasting salvation, He saves them for ever, to fill His eternal kingdom with the brightness of glory and the music of praise. Measure by what the Father has given, by what the Son has endured, that He may be the author of eternal salvation to every soul that trusts Him, the power which is put forth in you and around you, ordering all things to secure your full redemption. If there be any depth of consolation, any fountain of strength, in the thought, that your hope, the hope of your being, is the hope of God, the hope of Christ, the hope that sustained Him through His travail, and whose fulfilment is to be its harvest,

take it, and enshrine it in your heart—it is yours.

All things groan and travail in sympathy with your present struggles and sorrows; all things wait your full redemption to put on the brightness of their final glory. *“For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”*

The day of the manifestation of the sons of God! Son of God, be there—be there! Be there, to claim your birthright—be there to take your crown. Now, gird up the loins of your mind: endure hardness; fight the good fight of faith; resist even unto blood, striving against sin; the strain will not last for ever. The day cometh—it maybe, cometh soon—when you shall ungird your festal garments, and walk white-robed through the heavenly streets. There, no foeman waste Christ's wide dominions, no sin afflicts, no tears bestain, no death destroys. *“And there your sun shall no more go down, nor*

your moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your watching, your mourning, shall be ended for ever."

"THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT IN ME YE MIGHT HAVE PEACE. IN THE WORLD YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION: BUT BE OF GOOD COURAGE; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."









